

VII. MONEY VS. PRIMARY TIES

Duality exists in La Loma. Frequent allusion has been made to the independent functioning of two non-contemporaneous economic systems in La Loma. But this duality can also exist within individuals.

The nation can be construed as being in a state of transition, moving from one type of economic (and social) structure to another. In a model situation, each individual will be psychologically integrated into the prevailing system, living by the values and norms that will channel his behavior into the fullest participation in that system. But in the present state of transition, two economic systems are competing with each other for the commitment of the individuals in the society. The "old system" lures them one way (the serranos are participants in this system); the "new system" calls them to a new life in another direction. How does a system recruit and assimilate individuals? One of the mechanisms is to shape into the individuals certain needs which will best be filled by participation in that system. In the case of the "modern" system, money may be safely thought of as the central motive. With the more traditional system, as appearing in La Loma, it is difficult to isolate a central goal, by which the serranos are motivated to remain in that system. What they most fear losing--for example, in their anxieties concerning the pueblo--seems to be

primary ties to the source of their food. With these connections they feel safe; the thought of losing them and having to sell oneself "d' e'clavo.." like a slave in the pueblo to make money to keep from starving, fills them with anxiety. Primary ties to food, then, will be forwarded as one of the central needs filled by the "old" system and which motivates the serrano to continue in that system. In the case of the workers' system, the acquisition of money is the corresponding central motive.

The country is moving from one condition to another. Each of the systems is quite salient in the Dominican Republic. 37% of the labor force is in industry and 69.6% of the labor force is in agriculture of one form or another.<sup>73</sup> As to the latter figure, no reliable figure is available as to what percent of these own plots of land (squatter-farming such as the serrano system falling for practical purposes into this category), but, it can be supposed, a large enough percent to make it a common type of economic existence in the Dominican Republic.

With two competing systems, each widely spread, there might be ambivalence in the psychological commitment of participants to their respective systems. This is the "dualism within individuals" referred to in the first paragraph of this chapter. Perfect psychological integration does not exist; the serranos, rooted in the old, feel nevertheless a strong attraction for money, best acquired by participation in a new system.

The workers, rooted economically in the new, have leanings nonetheless back to certain aspects of life in the system of primary ties to one's food. There is a push and pull within individuals back and forth between the rewards of the two systems. And what each group would like to do is to have its cake and eat it. How they would like to accomplish this comes out in the protocols.

As to the money motive, it is of course strongest in the workers. However an important observation must be made here; the relationship of the workers of La Loma to money is not the same as the relationship between worker and money that holds in a more typical industrial setting. Money does not hold quite the same place in the motivational scheme of the workers of La Loma as it does, say, in that of an American factory worker.

In a system such as is prevalent in the United States, the workers receive a weekly paycheck. The money received is used to pay for food, clothes, lodging, diversions, and whatever else the worker decides. The system in La Loma differs greatly. Payday, as was seen, is fortnightly. Pay is on the basis of how much the sawmill produces; since the sawmill frequently breaks down, there are frequent fortnights with no pay, as the worker uses up credit slips in the Company store. As will be seen later, the money that reaches the workers' hands is ludicrously small in quantity. But if money

is the central motivation in the workers' system, what keeps them working?

The Company has the practice of "liquidación," severance pay. For every year the worker has been with the Company, he receives the equivalent of a fortnight's salary when he retires for age or is dismissed. Thus a worker who has been with the Company for twenty four years receives the equivalent of a year's salary (before deductions for food consumed on credit) when he retires. However, if a worker quits on his own before retirement age, he forfeits his liquidación. Thus the worker is kept performing in the system; he is bound psychologically as well as economically to the Company.

Severance pay will come in one big lump; on that much awaited day, the worker will hold in his hands perhaps more money than has passed through his hands cumulatively in his whole life. The fact that most of the men's present earnings never reach their hands only serves to accentuate more the image of that big bundle of cash awaiting them. For the worker of La Loma, the first real payday comes at the end of his career with the Company.

What consequences did this system have? In the first place it made the closing of the sawmill less a catastrophe than otherwise. For the workers the anxiety created by news of the impending shutdown centered not around the shutdown itself, but rather around the ques-

tion of whether "lo' patrono' malo'," "the bad bosses," would pay them what was coming to them or rather would say that since the government closed the sawmills, the government would have to give the severance pay (which the workers knew to be impossible). Thus their reaction to the crisis was almost completely shaped by awareness of the big bundle of money that might now reach their hands--and equal awareness of the possibility that it might never reach their hands at all. Attention was almost completely averted from the question of whether the shutdown was a good thing or not.

Secondly, since under this system the workers never really became familiar with money, they never had the chance to become psychologically integrated into a wage-paying system where primary bonds to one's source of food are safely broken. To elaborate: the hypothetical American factory worker has no direct ties with his source of food and little direct control over the source of his income. But he's not worried about this alienation: the regularity with which money is received and expended accustoms him to lack of primary ties with sources of food. Socialization into a functioning industrial system accustoms the worker to having no direct control over the system that keeps him alive; and he doesn't feel the need for a conuco or garden just in case.... The worker of La Loma, by virtue of the peculiarities in the payment system, has never

achieved this comfortable familiarity with money.

For this reason the lure of primary connections with the source of food could be expected to be more salient than if the system in which he worked were more typical of an industrial system.

This appears to be the case. In expressing their wishes for the future many of the workers look forward to being in a situation where they are owners either of a small farm or of a family run store, usually of foodstuffs. In this situation they combine elements of both systems: the money of the new system (most wishes for farms were for livestock raising, a money occupation), and the primary ties with one's livelihood of the old system. For most of them, the factory interlude in their life was ideally a passing period in which they make money, to invest it later in a finquita or a negocio, where they are in command.

Some examples from the protocols.

Me gustaría, si yo pudiera hoy o mañana conseguir con qué..yo tengo mucha familia que tienen finca', que están en buenas condiciones.. me gustaría tener una.. una pequeña finquita donde yo podría tener dos o tres vacas y un campito donde vivir. Es lo que más me encanta a mí.....

Pero si no me daría fuerza para yo hacer de comprar una finquita, me parece que si yo hallaría un sitio bueno, en un pueblo, pondría un comercio...que nadie sabe lo que uno puede desarrollar.

I'd like to...if today or tomorrow I could get the wherewithal...I have a lot of relatives who have farms, who are well off...I'd like to have a... a small farm where I could have two or three cows and a campo to live in. That's what I like best...

But if I couldn't get enough money to buy the farm, I think if I could find a good place in a pueblo, I'd set up a store..you never know what could come of that. 74

Another worker was asked what he could do if the Company were to offer him all his severance pay.

"Dáme mi dinero..rra rra rra rra..me voy." Allí voy, pongo un negocio y veo mi hijo y mi mujeri ahí trabajando, haciendo un negocito, comprando mi pollo, vendiendo, y comprando ..eh..el lechoncito, y vendiéndolo ma' p' alante, yo me voy defendiendo. Porque no hay otra indu'tria. Pero si hubiera otra indu'tria y la Compañía me diera mi dinero, yo voy, meto mi mujeri, le pongo un negocio y me voy a trabajar a otra.. a otra indu'tria..por allá.

"Gimme my money...whoosh.. see you later." I'd take off and set up a store and have my wife and kid work it, doing business, buying a chicken, selling it, buying, eh..piglets, selling them later; I'd manage. Because there's no other industry. But if there were another industry and the Company were to give me my money, I'd go put my wife in business, and I go work..in another industry.<sup>75</sup>

The same pattern: establish a privately run source of income. Then go out to look for more money while the wife and kids work in the store. A visitor is astounded by the number of small stores (pulperías) that fill the pueblos and campos of the Dominican Republic. But these "businesses" are less a result of entrepreneurial drive than of a desire for a secure family controlled source of income that combines the best of both worlds, the money of the factory and the security of the little plot of land.

The temporary nature of the worker's commitment to factory work has also been alluded to, where factory wages are a mere stepping stone to the family-owned business, run by the wife and kids. This comes out in the following passage, where a worker fancies himself after a few years of work in "New York."

En Nueva York con dos o tres años que Ud. v' ahí a trabajar, Ud. ve el jornal que Ud. gana, y cuando Ud. diga: "Yo voy a salir de Nueva York para la República Dominicana, yo me voy allí con die' mil o quince mil peso', yo voy a plant' un negocio, voy a comprar un carro, se lo voy a dar a mi hermano que me lo maneje, yo voy a de'cansai mi vida, voy a poner ahí mi familia a trabajar, para yo de'cansai...el largo tiempo vaya tar trabajando con la cabeza con e'to quince mil o veinte mil peso' que yo gané en Nueva Yor'."

In New York, with two or three years of work which you put in up there, you look at what you earn, and you say to yourself: "I'm going to leave New York and return to the Dominican Republic; I'm going to go back there with ten thousand or fifteen thousand pesos, I'm going to set up a business, I'm going to buy a car, I'm going to have my brother drive it as a taxi, and I'm going to take life easy; going to put my family to work, so I can rest up.... gonna spend my time working with my head, with these fifteen thousand or twenty thousand dollars that I made in New York..."<sup>76</sup>

Many interesting things come out in the above segment. There is the desire to set up in business, the desire to see one's family working, the desire to have a life of leisure where one is working "con la cabeza", with one's head. The security of primary ties with one's source of income would be present. But over and above this, the man is expressing a desire to be in the "leisure class," which was seen to be one of the most prevalent status symbols that has persisted in Latin America.<sup>77</sup> This same individual, in another part of the interview, expressed pride at being such a skilled truck driver. Is this a contradiction? Not really. It is another manifestation of dualism: the co-existence in the same person--in this case the truck driver, so proud of his skills--of norms belonging to two different, non-contemporaneous value systems. In terms



of one, he is proud of his ability to climb under the hood of the truck, repair damages, and emerge covered with sweat and grease; in terms of the other, he envisions himself lounging on his porch, puffing on an American cigarette, while his family hustles back and forth from the store, bringing in the cash.

Duality exists in the serrano as well as in the worker. The serrano has his primary ties to the source of his food, but he is looking for money as well. Just as the worker tends to turn to "business" as a combination of the best of both worlds, the serrano likewise would like to participate in the two systems. One of the requests, for example, that the serranos had of the government was to allow them to cut down the pines on the conucos which they have had for many years, to sell the wood. Some wanted the government to set up an "industry" near La Loma where the serranos could obtain a regular income without leaving their conucos.

The following passage is from a serrano who has his conuco, but who has also worked as a wage earner for the Company and is at a vantage point for comparing the two systems. The question asked was: of the two types of work, farming and working for the Company, which do you like best?

Bueno...en realidad...el conuco e' mejor. (Porque?)

Well, really, the conuco is better. (Why?) In the sense

Por ei sentido que si Ud. hace un conuco y lo..y siembra vamo' suponei do' cajone' de arró', pero tiene derecho a coitai, si se da bueno..theie derecho a coitai 200 cajone'. Y ya..ya eso va en bien suyo, no e' veida? de su familia. Dice Ud. "Bueeeecno..." Ud. 'ta contento. "Carajo, ya yo doité 200 cajone' de arró ya e'to me si've pa' mi comida, no e' veida? Que si Ud. halla...lo sembró de yuca, cuando y'esa yuca 'ta de sacaila, Ud. anda con ei macuto, Ud. llena su macuto de yuca y viene contento pai bojfo, veida? Le trae yuca a su familia. Lo mi'mo que se e' un macuto de batata, de maí', de paquet' 'e caña, racimo 'e plátano, aaaah, eso e' bueno, eso e' muy bueno. También, porque ei que trabaja en la Compañía, el aserradero, sí, muy bien, que ei dinero se necesita, tú sabe; porque Ud. hace su trabajo, y la Compañía se lo paga. Sí. Que si Ud. necesita comprai la remúa, se la compra. Necesita un pai de zapato, con eso se lo compra. Y en fin, que ..también se necesita, no e' veida? Pero ei conuco, ei conuco se necesita mucho. Mucho! je je je. Síiii. Pa' nosotros' lo' pobre' aquí, tú sabe. Que nosotros' que como quien dice, eso e' lo de nosotros' aquí. Trabajai, hacei conuquito, a veí si no' podamo' defendei.

that if you make a conuco, and let's say you plant 2 boxes of rice..chances are you'll harvest, if it's a good crop, two hundred boxes. And that.. that's really to your advantage, right? And your family's You say: "Man!" You're really happy. "Cripes, I've harvested two hundred boxes of rice..." well that's gonna be my food, right? If you find..if you plant it with yuca, when that yuca is ready to be harvested, you go out there with your basket, you fill the basket and come back really happy to your cottage, right? You bring yuca to your family. It's the same with a basket of sweet potatoes, of corn, of sugar cane, bunches of plantains...aw, that really feels good, that really feels good. But also..if you work in the Company, in the sawmill...it's true you do need money, y' know. You do your work and the Company pays you. Yep. If you need to buy clothes, you buy it. You need a pair of shoes, you buy 'em. I mean... you also need that, right? But the conuco...the conuco is really necessary. Really, ha ha ha. Sure. For us poor people here, y' know? That's sort of our life. Farm, make conucos, to see if we canget by. Yep.<sup>78</sup>

He likes the two, but it's obvious where his heart is. There is an attraction for money, but the pull of the conuco is so much stronger.

To sum up this chapter: the serrano and the worker both live under the influence of two economic systems; both have goals and norms that belong to two different life styles. But the serrano's center of gravity is still on his conuco, money being an appendage--of increasing importance, it is true--to a life founded on primary relations to the soil; from this base the serrano appears to be looking for ways to increase his money income without forfeiting the security of his conuco. The worker, on the other hand, is planted in an economic system which rewards him with money (or the hope of it), but which alienates him from primary ties with the source of his sustenance. Not fully integrated into this system, the worker fancies the day when, without forfeiting a good monetary income, he will be able to reestablish these primary ties and regain control, if not of a tract of land, at least of the source of his income. Neither serrano nor worker is fully integrated psychologically into the respective systems where they in fact function. The serrano is happy on his conuco but casts occasional glances in the direction of the sawmill; the worker has made the leap into industry, but keeps looking back over his shoulder at the man working his land.