Cities and Regional Thought in Argentina and Chile Between 1850 and 1930

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Résumé de l'article
Cette étude expose les vues de quelques universitaires et chefs de gouvernement d'Argentine et du Chili sur quatre aspects reliés du développement régional et urbain: la colonisation, les déséquilibres entre milieu rural et urbain, la primauté de l'urbain et le déséquilibre entre le centre et la périphérie, les inégalités sociales. Leurs analyses de même que leurs solutions sont encore valables.
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Résumé/Abstract

Cette étude expose les vues de quelques universitaires et chefs de gouvernement d'Argentine et du Chili sur quatre aspects reliés du développement régional et urbain: la colonisation, les déséquilibres entre milieu rural et urbain, la primauté de l'urbain et le déséquilibre entre le centre et la périphérie, les inégalités sociales. Leurs analyses de même que leurs solutions sont encore valables.

This paper is a discussion of how scholars and government leaders in Argentina and Chile regarded four related aspects of regional and urban development: settlement, urban-rural imbalances, urban primacy and imbalances between centre and periphery, and the stark reality of social inequalities. Their analyses and their solutions are still valid today.

Introduction

The scholars studying the region are particularly concerned with the debate on the application of the development pole theory; on the future of urbanization; on the social, economic and political factors of development and the housing problem; on urban primacy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its impact in the social-economic development; on relations between industrialization, urbanization and urban concentration; on the influence of the historical process over foreign dependency and the formation of present urban and regional networks; on relations between country and city through history — among other topics dealing with the problems of urban and regional development in Latin America. It is not by mere chance that, with slight differences, such titles appeared in an anthology published a few years ago that was devoted to urban and regional development in Latin America.1

The debate has often become an indictment of the impact of capitalism in the development of Latin American countries. Because of its relevance with respect to present criticism of the political values that control the region, the debate will undoubtedly go on, providing new understandings and methodological contributions. It will be necessary, however, to see whether the experts who study these problems, especially the economists, go beyond an ideological discussion based strictly on economic factors to one based on a broader analysis.

Historical analysis combining regional and local quantitative analyses with the contributions of a social history that, in spite of great institutional difficulties, is spreading through South America, may become one of the essential contributions to this debate. The problems that reasonably are a matter of concern for the analysts of contemporary urban and regional development drew the attention of and were analysed by both the scholars and government leaders in the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century.

For this essay we have selected two countries, Argentina and Chile, and four major subjects — settlement, urban-rural imbalances, urban primacy and imbalances between centre and periphery, and social inequalities — to illustrate the regional and urban thought which prevailed concerning the future of those societies in a period during which the spatial structure and the fundamental characteristics were determined.

ARGENTINA AND CHILE BETWEEN 1850 AND 1930

Starting from the 1850s, Argentina and Chile began to experience increasingly differentiated regional rates of demographic and economic growth. This trend increased in intensity towards the end of the last century and remained unchanged until the end of the studied period.2 Along with these imbalances between regions, intraregional differences became sharper. Thus depending on the regions, a process of population growth was initiated or accentuated, showing concentration in certain areas: on the coast, particularly in zones directly influenced by the port of Buenos Aires, and in the central region of Chile (essentially the areas near Valparaiso and Santiago). In this way, demographic growth brought about an unequal distribution of population and the primacy of the capital cities in each country. Some major regional cities also tended to grow during the decade under study.3

In our research, we chose the period 1850-1930 for a number of reasons. In these decades, Argentina and Chile achieved a better internal organization, which helped economic expansion in both countries and the settlement of territories unexploited until then. Institutional development during the second half of the nineteenth century was fundamental. Argentina enacted the Constitution in 1853, the Commercial Code in 1866, the Civil Code in 1868 and the Criminal Code in 1889. In Chile, the Constitution came into force in 1833, the Civil Code in 1855, the Commercial Code in 1865 and the Criminal Code in 1874. In the cultural field, the Academy of Fine Arts was created in Santiago, Chile. In 1869 and 1870 the newspapers Le Prensa and La Nación were founded, and in 1863, the Revista de Buenos Aires and the Revista de Artes y Letras in Chile, while the daily El Mercurio de Valparaíso began to be edited in Santiago. Primary and secondary education were expanded, the first technical schools were founded and important universities were established, including the Catholic University of Chile, and in Argentina the University of La Plata and the University of the Littoral in Santa Fe and Rosario. In addition, immigration policies were implemented in both countries.

In the economic field, a pattern of development based on exchange with overseas countries was promoted, and it remained unchanged until the world crisis of 1930. Such a pattern was characterized by countries being monoculturists, making both national economies dependent on the ups and downs of the capitalist world market. Another particularly important aspect was the strong and growing presence of foreign capital in both economies, concentrated in public bonds and railway enterprises in Argentina, and in public bonds and

* The authors express their thanks for the support of the Institutions to which they belong, to the Urban and Regional Development Commission of CLACSO and to the Social Research Program on Population in Latin America (PIS-PAL).
mining enterprises in Chile; in the incipient industry, in banking and trading activities and in a lesser degree in agriculture, land speculation, communications, and public services. Towards 1880, from a total of English capital investments in Argentina, (£179,490,261) 55.2 per cent was in public bonds with 44.8 per cent in economic enterprises, most of it in railways and a minor part in public services. In 1928, investments in economic enterprises represented 84.4 per cent of a total investment of £420,395,352. In Chile during the same years, 1880 and 1928, investments in economic enterprises represented 8.3 per cent and 62 per cent respectively; in this case, mining, and to a lesser extent railways, were the most attractive sectors for British investors.

During the analyzed period, there was steady national population growth in both countries — more rapid between 1850 and 1913 than between 1913 and 1930. Argentina quadrupled its population between 1850 and 1930 while that of Chile doubled. Argentina’s population growth was closely linked to the arrival of immigrants, especially from Europe. Due to population growth, to colonization policies promoted by national and provincial governments as well as by entrepreneurs and due to the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, the settlement of both territories was rapidly expanded. While metropolitan cities were quickly and steadily growing, a number of secondary cities and towns that housed the increasing urban population began to develop. The number of urban centres in Argentina grew from 56 in 1869 to 332 in 1914, and in Chile from 45 in 1865 to 115 in 1920.

The whole process of national expansion was favoured at the world level by an advantageous institutional and structural situation during the first stages of the studied period. It was initially pushed by national resources, which were gradually replaced by foreign capital in the key enterprises.

As a result, a number of contrasts and imbalances were increasingly noticeable; the predominance of urban over rural areas and of certain privileged regions and cities to the detriment of the rest of the country; the replacement of national enterprises by foreign enterprises; quick gains due to speculation by government elites responding to party interests; credit misuse; and labour force exploitation. At the same time, the political parties, which were to last until today, were constituted. Labour unions that were to react against wage depreciation and poor living conditions were organized. Important social security laws were enacted, such as those regulating the work of women and minors, those establishing rules for retirement of employees and workers in certain unions, and those establishing the eight-hour working day and the obligation to pay wages in cash.

During this period, both countries opened their doors to foreign trade, taking advantage of the favourable situation in world markets. In Argentina’s case, it was for its livestock products (sheep, suet and hides) beginning in the 1850s, and for wheat some decades later. For Chile it was for wheat and mining products (silver from 1840 and later copper and nitrate). It was all a consequence of the increasing demand for food and raw materials from the industrial countries, favoured by technological development in transport and communications, the abundance of capital, and the competition for overseas markets started by capitalist countries in the industrialization process, along with massive immigration to the "new countries" — one of the most important migratory phenomena known in history. This approach to the outside world was determined by the way foreign relations were perceived by the predominant economic groups in Argentina and Chile at the time — producers and exporters of raw materials connected to enterprises dealing with mining, agriculture, livestock, trade, financing and transport.

Between 1860 and 1930, the concentration process in both national economies was accentuated. Our previous work for this period (see footnote 2) showed the increasing concentration of national population, industries and industrial workers, and also of foreign capital, in certain privileged regions and provinces. The same process was reproduced in each region and province, although there are enormous differences in the indicators we used.

The rapid process of urbanization and concentration of urban population in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe in Argentina (and within them, on the west side of the Paraná River — already suggesting the main industrial concentration of the country) and, for Chile, in the provinces of Santiago and Valparaiso and, due to mining exploitation, first in the near north and then in the farthest northern regions went side by side with the process of centralizing decision making. In fact, if we use employment in public services for measuring the increase of decision-making centralization, assuming a direct relationship between the number of public servants in a given province and the power of decision-making, we obtain the following results:

**Percentage of public servants, including the military, in the provinces of highest concentration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>1895</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>40.40</td>
<td>53.99</td>
<td>78.35</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10.58</td>
<td>15.72</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>35.98</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>34.52</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>31.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valparaiso</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norte Grande (Tarapacá and Antofagasta)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* The high percentage of public servants in the two peripheral provinces that constitute Norte Grande is a consequence of the importance of customs revenue, which was the main source of Chilean income during those years.

Around the 1870s, signs of growing differences in the development of the various regions began to appear. This was accentuated in Argentina during the first presidential term of Julio A. Roca (1880-1886) and particularly during the administration of Juárez Celman (1886-1890). As for Chile, the process started in 1855 (when Diego Portales became Minister of the Interior and of Foreign Affairs) as a consequence of a greater centralization of decision-making mechanisms and of the political power centralization in both the president and the official party. Such a situation came to a crisis point in Buenos Aires in 1890 when, after a period of strikes which had started three years previously, the economic crisis, the rise in the cost of living, and the currency devaluation led to the revolution of July 1890, causing Juárez Celman’s resignation. In Chile, the prolonged conflict between executive and legislative powers sharpened during the administration of Manuel Montt (1851-1861) and ended with Balmaceda’s restitution. During the 1870s and especially during the 1880s, both countries completed or undertook important public works — ports, urban improvement, public buildings, railways and telegraphs — which favoured the city of Buenos Aires and the littoral ports in Argentina and the cities of Santiago and Valparaiso in Chile.
It is within this perspective that the present essay is placed. Its central objective is to detect how some writers, essayists and politicians of the period perceived the regional imbalances and how they viewed these imbalances.

REGIONAL THOUGHT IN ARGENTINA

Settlement

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, the sparse population of Argentina and Chile drew the attention of travellers over their vast territories. In 1865, a young Englishman, who had come to Argentina to meet a friend in the hope of making a rapid fortune rearing sheep, described the landscape he saw from the stagecoach that crossed the pampas between Rosario and Córdoba: “The countryside we went through was, as usual, perfectly flat, and only occasionally would one see some shrubs or a rancho, that is, a clay shack.” Arriving at Fraile Muerto (now Bell Ville), some 220 kilometres west of Rosario and 180 east of Córdoba, “a shabby place, with hardly a few decent houses and clay shacks in most streets,” the traveller was astonished at the sight of the fields completely uninhabited spreading out “up to a region as unknown as the Sahara desert.”

Other travellers described in similar terms the sparse population and the poverty of rural life. Several governments, being aware of this, saw in European immigration a possible way to economic progress and production growth. Shortly after Independence, scholars in both countries, concerned about the lack of population, wrote the first reports and enacted the first laws to promote immigration.

From 1820, the time statistics were kept regarding people arriving in the country, the number of immigrants appeared to be quite small. On August 22, 1821, the Buenos Aires legislature passed a law concerning the promotion of immigration, and in 1824 a special commission was created for the settlement of arriving foreigners and craftsmen. Actually, the members of the “1837 generation” — including Alberdi, Gané, Echeverría, Gutiérrez, Vincente Fidel López and Marcos Sastre, among others, all of them concerned about Argentina’s social reality were the promoters of the unsettled regions, the building of cities and the development of communications. Moreover, they accepted the idea of federalism — which was against their original thought — because it constituted the people’s wishes.

In 1853, Alberdi was critical in his description, “Without large populations there is no cultural development, there is no remarkable progress; everything is mean and small. Nations of half a million inhabitants may be nations because of their territory; on account of their population they will be just provinces, villages, and everything about them will bear the stingy mark of provincialism.” Furthermore, he stated that “population — a South American need that embodies all the needs — is the exact measure of our governments. The Minister of State who does not double the population of these nations every ten years will have wasted his time in trifles and superfluities.” The population census is the rule of South American ministers’ capacity.” Alberdi drew the outline of an immigration plan which, based on religious tolerance, and the use of railway transport, free navigation and free trading, would have encouraged occupation of the continent’s hinterland. And he synthesised the guarantees that the civil law of the Republics should enact in order to attract immigrants: “Firstly, to remove the obstacles and hindrances of backward times which impede or make difficult mixed marriages; secondly, to simplify civil requirements for obtaining residence; thirdly, to grant foreigners the benefit of civil rights without requesting needless reciprocity; fourthly, to give all aliens the same civil rights the citizen has to dispose of his posthumous possessions by will or otherwise.” He also proposed the reform of the mortgage system, insurance for the disabled, encouragement of private credit and the suppression of internal customs.

Governments should promote the “real and great immigration” coming from “Europe (which) will bring us its new genius, its industrious habits, its civilized practices” by means of magnanimous land grants, “by the great, wide and generous system which in four years has brought forth California by the allowed freedom, by the privileges that will help the foreigner to forget his condition, persuading him that he lives in his own country.” Alberdi condemned the speculative colonization that was beginning to thrive in 1856, when big capitalists obtained huge land grants so that they could partially subdivide them, establishing therein small groups of immigrant families. In 1868, in his first presidential message, Sarmiento said, “Through the most thoughtless, needless colonization system that any people have ever tried, the most populated part of the Republic is already owned so that the immigrant cannot find an inch of land free from the hindrances opposed to its acquisition by private property. Even with 2,350,000 square kilometres (nine hundred thousand square miles), and a population of only one and a half million, two-thirds of them do not know where to set their homes, and the immigrant does not know where to turn to place his sleeping mat.”

A year later, when the first National Population Census was carried out, there were 211,900 aliens in Argentina, which represented 12.15 per cent of the national population. Of this total, 71.34 per cent were concentrated in the province of Buenos Aires. Nearly half of the immigrants recorded by the 1869 census had arrived in the previous six years during Bartolomé Mitre’s presidency (1862-1868). The following President, Sarmiento stated that “immigration comes as a human avalanche and we do not have a law to make land available for them.” Several provinces passed legislation about this issue, in certain cases providing for the donation of land to spontaneous immigrants and the sale of much larger lots in the vicinity of the incipient colonies (e.g. Law of 1871 in the province of Córdoba and Law of 1877 in the province of Corrientes) which obviously could not be bought by the immigrants without resources or credit.

The Law No. 817 of 1876 (Immigration and Colonization Law) tried to put in order the problem of immigrants’ settlement in different regions of the national territory by creating provincial bureaus and a hotel for immigrants near the port of Buenos Aires. It constituted the first colonization plan for the country and allowed the direct or indirect participation of the state and provincial government as well as that of private individuals and personal initiative. However the railroads, which had begun to connect the coastal ports with the hinterland in all directions, did not reach the unoccupied areas. In addition, the best land was already the property of powerful landowners. This discouraged the immigrants, and the majority of those who finally reached the land ended up as tenants, sharecroppers in a farm, or simply labourers. As a consequence, most of the immigrants remained in, or came back to, Buenos Aires (which exerted a growing economic and political domination over the country), to Rosario or to the main ports and cities of the littoral.

Despite these limitations, the immigration balance was highly positive. In 1895 the foreign population was 1,004,527, 24.4 per cent of the national population. From this total, 62.3 per cent were settled in the province of Buenos Aires, especially in Buenos Aires City, where the shortage of housing and public services, uncontrolled expansion of the suburbs, and problems associated with mixed land uses were evident.

The small rural farm had become an impossible aim for hundreds of thousands of immigrants. When the government
decided to act in 1903 by legally proscribing the large estates (Latifundia), it was too late, and the best land had been subdivided. The huge estancias were economically and socially outdated in a country which had started to produce grains and linen in growing quantities. Torino was right when he wrote in 1912 that an abundant immigration and large estates were incompatible. Of the native Argentina, wrote Romero, who used the term Argentina criolla, "ethnically and socially homogeneous and economically organized within a primary system, there was soon nothing left but a faint memory, gloomily preserved among certain groups that had lost weight in the leadership of collective life. Starting from around 1880, the alluvial Argentina—the one that was formed as a consequence of such commotion—grows, develops and struggles to find a system of equilibrium which, obviously, would be attained only with the help of time."  

Rural life in the pampas—the new hinterland of the coastal ports—changed rapidly. Many immigrants settled in the agricultural colonies of the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Entre Ríos and Santa Fe and developed agriculture, dairies and farms while the native population and the gauchos went to work as unskilled peons or wage workers in the big estancias. 

Although the Constitution of 1853 granted aliens the same rights as Argentinians, the colonization policy was guided to prompt the settlement of immigrants in the colonies that began to develop in the mid 1850s. In 1866 a law was passed in the province of Santa Fe which gave native families, willing to settle in the colonies founded according to such law, the same privileges as those of foreign families. As Pérez Amuchastegui points out, the natives were favoured with the same rights as immigrants. Laws such as this had but limited impact, however, because the native population was sparse and dispersed, or simply because it was easier for the provincial governments to deal with intermediaries for the settlement of European immigrants. 

REGIONAL IMBALANCES 

This was a topic of concern for some of the outstanding Argentine essayists and politicians. In 1912, when Juan Alvarez wrote "Las Guerras Civiles Argentinas," the country was still quite unpopulated and the main regional urban centres remained poorly interconnected. "In order to populate the country," wrote Alvarez, "there are not enough Indians and gauchos left, and the child death rate is so high that our growth is largely due to immigration." Then he asked himself, "What were the reasons that prevented this new country...from constituting a compact homogeneous whole and from achieving during the nineteenth century the highest ideals of human solidarity?" 

During the first years of the 1870s, national production went through a critical period, which it began to recover from in 1876, and it started a period of rapid expansion that began to be consolidated in 1880. But the growth was geographically and sectorially uneven. The construction of railways enlarged the hinterland of Buenos Aires' harbour and of the ports along the Parana river, and allowed the incorporation of regions that were hitherto unexploited, or hardly exploited. At the same time, it established competition that limited the frail economies in the interior. "The (regional) inequalities," remarked Alvarez, "were scarcely noticeable before the development of agriculture and industry in the littoral." He added that Argentine history is divided into "two ages determined by the rail." A consequence of the distinct policies applied by successive governments for the development of the littoral and hinterland regions was synthesized by Joaquin V. Gonzalez in a work contemporary to Alvarez's. "The Argentine Republic (wrote Gonzalez) still has unresolved problems and will have them for a long time; the problems of actual occupation, population and colonization and utilization of its twenty-four federal territories where millions of leagues of public land await the fertilizing work and the closer condensation of the population's primitive nucleus which form the organic block of the Republic." 

Another author who contributed a great deal to the social and economic history of Argentina was Alejandro Bunge, whose work stretches from the first decade of the twentieth century to its culmination with the publication of "Una Nueva Argentina" (A New Argentina) in 1940, shortly before he died. Bunge was one of the first to criticize the general lack of interest in the country for acquiring adequate information and statistics on which the "leading decisions" should be founded and one of the first to analyze what he considered false beliefs around which national life was carried on due to a lack of "an exact understanding of reality." This aspect, together with its resolution, constituted, in Bunge's opinion, "the two essential aspects for a serious and urgent national enterprise." Among various topics approached by Bunge in "Una Nueva Argentina", two are chosen. Bunge was one of the first authors to draw attention to the economic imbalance of development in this "fan-shaped country." In 1924 he wrote: "We were able to verify the following fact: One-third of the republic's territory, located within a circular arc with a radius of 780 kilometres, having as its centre the capital city, contained eight-tenths of the population and nine-tenths of the economic capacity." This was partly due to climate and geography—mainly, the rain distribution—but also the demographic attraction of the littoral's big cities, the investment of most of the nation's fiscal resources in the area near Buenos Aires, and to the economic policy (or rather the absence of a policy) "which has explained the attitude of that first region looking abroad and turning its back on the interior." Bunge improved his first analysis by using census returns related to industry, agriculture and livestock in the 1930s, and he elaborated a series of indicators which led him to divide the country into three great zones—the first with a radius of 580 kilometres starting from Buenos Aires city, the second with a radius of 1,000 kilometres, and the third embracing the farthest regions beyond the second zone. 

**Distribution of the demographic and economic values in the three zones (percentage).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zones</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Territory</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area cultivated with grain and linen</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad lines</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephones</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobiles</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital investment in mining and manufacturing industries</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population in centres with more than 1,000 inhabitants</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic capacity by km²</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bunge, Alejandro E. "Una Nueva Argentina" pp.223-224 Editorial Guillelmo Kraft Ltda, Buenos Aires, 1940

* Bunge measured economic capacity on the basis of 100 economic values corresponding to zone 1 and relating its average to the respective territorial area.
The deterioration of "living conditions increased with the distance from the first privileged sector." In 1916 and 1930 respectively, illiteracy among males over 18 years old reached 3.98 per cent and 2.54 per cent in Buenos Aires city (the federal capital); 30.26 per cent and 17.32 per cent in the province of Buenos Aires, and 30.90 per cent and 19.23 per cent in Santa Fe (zone I). It rose to 51.74 per cent and 42.03 per cent in Corrientes, 37.88 per cent and 29.78 per cent in San Luis, and 44.33 per cent and 29.08 per cent in Córdoba (zone II), and to 48.46 per cent and 35.30 per cent in La Rioja, and 47.39 per cent and 33.67 per cent in Jujuy (examples of zone III). At the national level, illiteracy among males over 18 years old represented 35.65 per cent in 1969 and 21.96 per cent in 1930. The child death rate in 1931-1935 which was 59.1 per thousand to “three Chinese walls obstructing the settlement of the hinterlands; native population distribution, taxes and their iniquitous distribution, and Latifundium.” Bialet Massé described the ill treatment suffered by northern workers: “I saw there (in the province of Jujuy), for the first time, complaints and claims against a medieval feudalism, without a knife and with the rope of the company’s supply store, without banner and cauldron, though sometimes with whip and cepo; with private issue of money, with money circulating out of the emission state; without the bridle of law and justice.” He denounced the filth and sadness of rural villages and camps, the endemic malaria which could be prevented at virtually no cost, the exploitation of Indians, children and women. Bialet Massé urgently asked for “a labour law, the abolishment of the vafe (sales slip) and the company’s supply store, for a rational workday and Sunday rest... but above all, for the prohibition of children’s work before the age of fifteen and the hiring of them for night work...” And “in the northern sugar plantations; for (national) regulations, cautions for mining workers since provinces do not take care of them” and “the need for a formal preoccupation with the workers’ nourishment.”

**URBAN PRIMACY AND URBAN-RURAL DIFFERENCES**

**The Primacy of Buenos Aires**

If we analyze the reasons for the increasing political and economic influence of Buenos Aires City over the rest of the country and the conflicts that an undefined relationship between the two continued to create, we would be writing the history of Argentina during the first eighty years of its independence. Even today, this provokes resentment, partly justified, from the population of the interior. With some intervals, the struggle of provincial economic interests to prevent Buenos Aires hegemony was carried out during the nineteenth century and culminated when Buenos Aires was established as the Republic’s capital city by means of Law 1029 of September 20, 1860. Already in the Cabildo Abierto (City Hall’s Assembly) of May 22, 1810, Juan José Paso, one of its members espoused the theory that Buenos Aires was assuming the position of the eldest sister protecting in an emergency the rest of the provinces and taking care of their interests. In 1828, a plan for making Buenos Aires the national capital was drawn up, and, during the long period of civil war, Buenos Aires was always a feared and resisted capital, defended and attacked by some leaders from the provinces as well as from Buenos Aires. “They are not two parties, they are two countries; they are not Unitarians and Federalists. They are Buenos Aires and the provinces,” Alberdi said and he insisted, “Nations’ capital cities are not decreed. They are the spontaneous results of facts.” He added “the old capital cities of South America represent the rooted colonial system, acquainted in its own way, experienced with its own style, proud of its physical strength, and therefore, unable to endure the pain of a new education.”

From the provinces’ point of view, Buenos Aires pretended to replace Spain, maintaining the same monopoly that the latter had exerted during colonial times. This was put into practice through the army’s command and the control of foreign trade by means of customs. From Buenos Aires’ point of view, the revolution had been initiated by its residents and it demanded continued leadership. The performance of some of its leaders gave rise to the resentment and suspicion of the city in the hinterland, which increased as Buenos Aires dominated the provinces through its economic and political power.

The Constitution of 1853, by adopting the representative, republican and federal form of government and by dividing the legislative, executive and judiciary powers, defined the pro-

Social Inequalities

Several writers, essayists and politicians were seriously concerned about the country’s social problems. Living conditions in Buenos Aires’ slums located in the districts of La Concepción, Piedad, San Telmo Balvanera, Socorro and San Nicolás, were revealed by popular writers such as Caterino de la Calle44, by physicians such as Guillermo Rawson, author of “Estudio sobre las casas de inquilinatos de Buenos Aires” (a Study of the Slum Dwellers of Buenos Aires) (1885) and Eduardo Wilde who wrote “Curso de Higiene Pública” (lectures on Public Hygiene) (1883); and by authors such as Roberto Payró, Eugenio Cambaceres, Francisco Sicardi and Santiago Estrada, and by scholars like Samuel Gache who, in 1900, wrote “Les logements ouvriers à Buenos Aires” (Workers’ Housing in Buenos Aires), and Adrian Pavoni, author of “Los trabajadores argentinos” (Argentinian Workers) (1898).

Living conditions in the interior were best described at the beginning of the century by Juan Bialet Massé, a Catalan physician who in 1904 prepared an extensive report on “El estado de las clases obreras argentinas” (The Situation of the Argentinian Working Classes) at the request of Joaquín V. González, Minister of the Interior during Roca’s second presidential term (1898-1904). Bialet Massé travelled over the north and central provinces and territories of the country, and pointed
The Constitution of 1853 was sworn by the provinces that constituted the Confederation, but not by the province of Buenos Aires, which refused to give up the control of the only real source of income available to the Confederation government — Buenos Aires’ customs. Years of continuous conflicts came about, interrupted now and then by short periods of negotiations during which the country’s economic unification was attempted. Buenos Aires stressed its economic hegemony since it was the province best placed to profit from the good market situation for livestock products during the decade of 1850-60, particularly for cattle, leather and suet, all of which meant higher incomes for customs. This situation led to the consolidation of Buenos Aires City and its increasing prosperity.

Several authors of the analysed period and subsequent decades, reacted against Buenos Aires centralism and the growing primacy of the capital city in all the aspects of national life. During his stay in Chile, Sarmiento proposed the creation of a capital city for the United States of South America, suggesting that the latter should be integrated by Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Sarmiento proposed to locate a city on Martin Garcia Island, on the northeastern corner of the Rib de la Plata (La Plata River), near the confluence of this river with the Uruguay. He was thinking of a small city to be named Arigoplos, that would balance the excessive centralism exerted by Buenos Aires upon the provinces of the Confederation. “If a geographic map of Argentina is consulted (Sarmiento wrote), one can notice that, if compared to almost any country in the world, it is the most ruinously organized regarding the proportional distribution of its wealth, power and civilization all over the confederate provinces.”

Sarmiento admired the institutional organization of the United States which discarded the big colonial cities and chose a new site for the capital of the Union. To him, this indicated “an expedient that reconciled the opposed pretensions of the different cities participating in the association, without making any one feel dependent on any other.” According to Sarmiento, Congress had to overcome the historic errors that allowed the confederation to have only one port equipped for foreign trade. It was necessary to promote river navigation to the interior carrying the same benefits to both littoral provinces and Paraguay.

The subject was bitterly discussed among representatives of both the provinces and the capital city during the subsequent decade. But when the moment arrived to decide the role of Buenos Aires, Sarmiento vetoed the move of the capital to an interior city three times during his presidential term (1868-1874).

Alberdi saw the old South American capitals as “the headquarters and the fortress of colonial traditions”; and they were therefore a threat to political freedom. He judged them unable to incorporate the reforms required by the new countries and he suggested replacing their power with “the cities less populated by such people, that is to say, the newest ones, that are most capable of learning and carrying out the new Government system.” He added, “The republic must create the new cities in its own image, the same way the colonial system made the old ones for its own objectives.” Like Sarmiento, Alberdi tried to show the inconveniences that Buenos Aires centralism was posing to the balanced development of the Confederation’s institutions. But neither of them defined the location of Argentina’s new capital city. They even left the door open, by political decisions (Sarmiento) and by omission (Alberdi), for the permanence of Buenos Aires as the national capital, even though the situation in the country after 1852 favoured the idea of moving the capital from Buenos Aires, “the old bastion of monopoly,” to another place on the shores of the Paraná River.

The author of the most important essay on the hegemony of Buenos Aires within the country was Juan Alvarez, a historian and jurist who lived most of his life in Rosario, whose third municipal census he conducted in 1910. In 1917, he published an essay on “El problema de Buenos Aires en la Republica Argentina” (The Problem of Buenos Aires in Argentina), which complements “Las guerras civiles argentinas” (The Argentine Civil Wars) published five years before.

“The problem of Buenos Aires (wrote Alvarez) until now has not had a satisfactory solution, each day it becomes more serious, and if it is not looked at, it will continue to act as a motive of imbalance that should by no means be considered chronic or hopeless.” Alvarez recognized the natural advantages of the site of Buenos Aires, which made of it “the political, educational, artistic, and religious centre of the country” and “the main commercial and industrial market-place in Argentina.” But he considered its location as a disadvantage, if it was to be a real “axis of national economy, away from the sources of energy and of some indispensable resources, too distant from the interior markets, with subsequent and unnecessary costs for the transportation of merchandise.” “Buenos Aires, with more than one million and a half inhabitants, in a country of eight million, forms a disturbing unitarian nucleus within the federal mechanism.” Alvarez analysed three “determinant influences for the abnormal development of the metropolis.” He dedicated a chapter to each of them:

a. The location of the large seaport in Buenos Aires, favoured by consecutive governments despite multiple natural inconveniences for navigation, was transformed into “the most suitable and accessible port of the country, substituting the old advantages set forward by official monopoly with new legal preferences.”

b. The concentration of industry favoured “by the policy started in 1890, (that) shows unmistakably the tendency to settle immigrants in the big city,” by the protectionism of government’s measures whose real weapon “is the right of entry,” by the influence of the railroad design and of the type of tariffs that particularly protected the federal capital, and by privileges obtained through official banks’ credits and public investments.

c. The seat of the national authorities attracts thousands and thousands of employees who, with their families and the personnel of embassies, legations and consulates, represent a high percentage of the city population. Besides, “many financial agents representing banks, insurance companies and other enterprises” established themselves permanently or temporarily in Buenos Aires in order to be near the government. From 1886, the government also spent huge amounts of money in public buildings, creating additional employment sources.

Alvarez wondered if the capital should be changed, and to where it should be moved. The latter was for Alvarez “the actual knot of the problem.” Like other authors, he did not decide on its location. He just concluded, due to countless historical and circumstantial reasons, that it had to be a new city. Alvarez’ suggestion of stimulating the development of five industrial centres “in certain self-sufficient regions”, with technical schools...
and a general fellowship programme was a very interesting idea. Two of these centres would be ports: Rosario, converted into a shipyard, a river fleet base, and a transportation centre; and Bahia Blanca converted into a textile and administrative-political centre of the region and base of the sea fleet. The three others would be located in the interior. “For the fast development of Córdoba, Tucumán and Mendoza, it is necessary, at least, to make them main customs centres, give them arms and capital, and to restructure the railways tariffs. The last three measures should be extended to Rosario and Bahia Blanca.”

Buenos Aires’ decongestion was not a practical measure if there was not a definite intervention of the state, which lacked great resources. Therefore, the most reasonable thing to do was to divert towards those new points “the same factors” that allowed Buenos Aires to increase the effects of nature’s factors.

**REGIONAL THOUGHT IN CHILE**

**Settlement**

Almost all the Chilean intellectuals who wrote at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century made it clear in their writings that the country was going through a period of crisis. Many of them linked it to the immense wealth of the country as a consequence of the nitrate mines exploitation. McIver wrote:

> The gold of the territory that forced us to obtain, neither avidity or selfishness, but our own confidence, was to be the magic wand that would create ports, railways, canals and roads, schools and immigration, industries and wealth, and well-being throughout the Republic…what a bitter awakening! Ports and railways, canals and roads, schools and immigration, industries and wealth, work and well-being were just dreams, the gold came, not as a kind rain that fertilizes earth, but as a devastating torrent which extricated the energy and hope from the soul and razed those public virtues which could enrich us.

Chile, during McIver’s childhood, was a country of great demographic voids. Its sparse population was concentrated in a few areas of the national territory, mainly the central zone. Before this, the government and the intellectuals saw in immigration a real possibility of populating the country. Vicente Perez Rosales was one of the leading figures among those public officials who promoted European immigration and colonization in Chile towards the middle of the last century. He was governor of a southern province, general consul in Hamburg and Colonization Officer before becoming a senator for the province of Llanquihue (1876-1881). In his autobiography he criticized the postponement of immigration policies by successive governments, in spite of the few demands of the immigrant. He was concerned about the slow increase of the national population, concluding that only immigration could fill the “lamentable void with the convenient promptness.” He praised the immigrants’ preoccupation with education and their impact on the “increase of business, on the comfort of life, and even an agreeable change in the physical aspect of settlements” in the territories they occupied.

Due to the importance he gave to immigration, he promoted European immigration and colonization in Chile towards the middle of the last century. He was governor of a southern province, general consul in Hamburg and Colonization Officer before becoming a senator for the province of Llanquihue (1876-1881). In his autobiography he criticized the postponement of immigration policies by successive governments, in spite of the few demands of the immigrant. He was concerned about the slow increase of the national population, concluding that only immigration could fill the “lamentable void with the convenient promptness.” He praised the immigrants’ preoccupation with education and their impact on the “increase of business, on the comfort of life, and even an agreeable change in the physical aspect of settlements” in the territories they occupied. Due to the importance he gave to immigration, he considered it important to preserve the public lands in the south of the country; “the mode and form of how the written contracts transmitted the rights over the land …and, above all, the lack of a representative of the state’s interests …very soon will leave the state without any land of its own. What would happen then to colonization?”

Although Perez Rosales favoured spontaneous immigration, without discarding the colonized settlements, he preferred the immigrants from the north of Europe, because they “rarely look behind when they find their happiness in some other land,” and also the Basques rather than the immigrants from Southern Europe, “spoiled by the mercifulness of the sky” and “only leaving their homes temporarily.”

In contrast, other authors saw immigration as the cause of vices and bad habits which would influence the native population. Among them, Nicolas Palacios Navarro should be singled out. He considered immigration as a burden for the country, since only the scum of Europe reached this land.

European immigration did not have much relevance in Chile, especially if we compare it to the huge repercussions it had in other countries of the southern part of Latin America. In 1865, foreign residents represented 1.27 per cent of the national population and only reached 3 per cent in 1920. However, the government made important efforts in order to promote immigration. The first colonization law was passed in 1824. This encouraged a type of immigration that, it was thought, would promote industrial development and would populate its empty regions. The law granted lands in perpetuity. Immigrants were exempted from production and municipal taxes if they would start industries using the country’s raw materials and local labour force in manufacturing previously approved by the government (articles 1 and 4). In order to promote the settlement of immigrants in rural areas, land granted to them would be exempt from direct and production taxes for a period of at least ten years (article 2).

This first law was followed by another in 1845 that promoted the settlement of remote places by nationals and foreigners on uncultivated public lands. Its main articles dealt with the amount of land assigned to them and the annuity and farming tools they would receive. For government authorities and thinkers of the middle nineteenth century, immigration not only met the function of populating and developing the country but was also seen as a means of improving people’s culture and bringing “civilization” to the farthest places of Chile.

Nicolas Palacios Navarro, one of the most influential writers of his time, defended the native Chilean people in “Raza Chilena” (Chilean Race) against the tendency of some intellectual circles to regard them with contempt. He also warned his compatriots against the growing foreign control of trade and industry, and of the privileges received by foreigners in relation to the natives. His position on this issue was similar to the one Encina adopted a decade later. Both in Chile and Argentina, some intellectuals and politicians associated immigration with some of the worst influences in their societies.

**Urban-Rural Imbalances**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, important migratory flows brought about the displacement of the rural population from the central and southern zones and its concentration in the main cities and the north of the country. Very few authors of the time made reference to the disparity among regions. Valdes Cange, writing in 1910, gave the most effective description.

There are problems common to all regions; in all nations there are provinces where all the misfortunes come together. The problem of drinking water and toilets is very serious. Poor people in some provincial neighbourhoods do not have them at all. Southern provinces and the two in the north gained in the Pacific War, present abominable characteristics…drinking water may be called so only if one ignores the meaning of the word ‘potable’…”

The same author goes on:

> Furthermore, in the north, water is in the hands of speculators who sell it …for a long time they [the people] requested that this service be managed by the state or the municipalities; occasionally they have almost attained it, but the influence of some magnate has always interfered …77

Further on, the author refers to the great differences existing between the main cities (in the central zone) and the northern
Chile's economy concerned a great number of Encina's contemporaries. The situation was described by McLver:

Others in order to increase its own well-being by eliminating or ousted the national merchant marine, and dominated banks and the beginning of the second half it was taken over by foreign of what is national in the control of business and in the economy was in a pathological state. While the economy was mainly in national hands until the middle of the last century, from the beginning of the second half it was taken over by foreign interests who assumed control of the big mining enterprises, ousted the national merchant marine, and dominated banks and trade firms. In other words, Encina detected the "displacement of what is national in the control of business and in the possession of wealth."

Encina described this phenomenon of increasing denationalization in the following terms. "Never has a nation approached another nation to civilize it or to cede to it voluntarily part of its power or wealth. Every nation seeks contact with others in order to increase its own well-being by eliminating or dominating others." He continued:

When two economies are in contact and one is so weak that it cannot yet be a hindrance to the expansion of a more powerful one, the latter tries to subordinate the former, turning it into a helper of its development and power. The powerful country looks for the sympathy and admiration of the weak but not to assist it, nor make it a future rival but to increase its own well-being and power, and thereby create a satellite that will facilitate its growth and help it in the struggle with other countries.82

The presence of foreign capital in the dynamic sectors of Chile's economy concerned a great number of Encina's contemporaries. The situation was described by McLver:

To the initiative, the effort and capital of our citizens we owe the first railways and telegraphs, bridges, piers, credit houses, big irrigation canals and all sorts of enterprises. Could not the spirit and energy that once incited our country to work, even if not strengthened, at least be maintained?83

Tancredo Pinochet described the phenomenon as follows:

After seeing...how the struggle is initiated among modern nations, how every country proceeds in the defence of national interests and ideals, we have had the sad mission of showing how our country not only abdicates in this struggle but also gives up its arms, its camp and its banner. Our government, our educational institutions and almost all our elite seem to show an earnest desire for promoting the decay and ruin of national interests and ideals in order to see them replaced by foreign interests and ideals. It is not only a matter of lacking the national selfishness which is inherent in all well-established nations, but a matter of despising our race as if we Chileans were outsiders in own country and received by mercy in our own land.84

These writers basically had two problems in mind: the first was related to the profit received by foreign capitalists, even those living in Chile, for they did not actually bring capital into the country. Encina wrote: "Mining business does not incorporate wealth into the soil. It neither improves it nor increases its value on a permanent basis. The mining investor leaves behind only barrenness, holes, etc. The foreigner who goes away takes with him the whole profit of his effort put on copper or nitrate."84

The second problem was the presence of foreign capital in industry. Chilean industry at that time was purely a craft industry and mostly rural. Foreign industries that had settled in Chile brought a more advanced technology. They also had capital available at low interest (as long as capital was the productive factor of greater relative abundance according to the growth of capital accumulation in the central countries). Thus small national industry was unable to compete and many local industries went bankrupt or became stagnant, especially those with a rural base. Orrego Luco described the situation of rural workers towards the end of the nineteenth century;

... their small industries began to get ruined, their looms could not compete and began to be idle; the same was true of their tools, carts, ploughs and all the products of their rough craftsmanship. Railways were transforming country life causing the disappearance of roadside inns which were small industry sources for the labourer giving employment to women and children.85

Only a few years before, Cruchaga Montt wrote:

Individual action, neither well prepared nor firm, had not been enough for setting a solid base of progress to the country. Mining...is in an evident state of exhaustion. In its regime, agriculture obeys the traditions of poor land subdivision, of luxury and of lack of activity. The manufacturing industry has not been born yet...[and]...today all these small (rural) industries have been crushed by their foreign equivalents...86

In response to a general attitude preferring foreign workmanship to national workmanship, several intellectuals undertook the defence of the Chilean worker. Onofre Avendaño wrote in 1908: "The foreign worker is preferred to the native; even though his output is inferior and his work more expensive, he offers the advantage of being steady.87 Almost two years later, Valdés Caneg added: "The inferiority of the Chilean craftsman with respect to the foreigner lies almost exclusively in his lack of competence and in his informality...when education succeeds in correcting habits of our workers they will have no rivals."88

In that sense, Palacios Navarro denounced the lack of workshops and craft schools that would teach Chilean labour to perform the tasks needed by the national economy. In his view, "the only difference between the foreign and the Chilean craftsman is that the former has had thousands of arts schools and thousands of factories in which to learn the most diverse industries."89

One can clearly see a preference for foreign workmanship when analysing the colonization policy carried out by the Chilean government.90 Due to the depopulation of the south, foreign immigrants were brought to be settled there. On the other hand, it was quite difficult for the Chilean farmer to be accepted as a settler and many natives were eradicated (with the excuse that they were illiterate) in order to transfer this land to foreigners. Some said that the foreign colonizers included many vicious and ill people who knew nothing about agriculture.91 But they were "favoured with lands, instead of the natives and, among the latter, the strongest, the most industrious and skillful ones were forced to migrate."92 Furthermore, Palacios Navarro wrote, "We are in the presence of two of the most grave
facts that can be told to a people; the loss of their territory (as 
long as it is settled by foreigners) and that such loss is the result 
of the conscious and willful action of their rulers."93

A third problem dealt with by certain authors of the period 
indicated the totality of the phenomenon of dependency. This 
was the education system. From the start, Chilean culture was 
greatly influenced by some European countries. The elite 
tended to copy uses, consumption habits, architectural styles, 
other, inherent in European society, at the expense of the ver-


The foreign book constitutes the only nourishment for the 
mind. Under this influence (mainly French) an intellectual 
activity came to life reminiscent of that preceding the 
Renaissance. Chileans, in the second half of the nineteenth 
century, imitate the European intellectual production...our 
mentality, lacking strength and courage to get hold of scient-
ific methods, of artistic and literary proceedings in order to 
make work of its own, has enough with repeating what others 
thought or felt...it cannot conceive truth and beauty unless 
dressed up with the expression given by the foreign 
thinker.95

The creators of public education copied systems in the 
European fashion, ignoring the problems resulting from the 
transfer of educational programmes to a completely different 
situation. Encina tells us "Our education (was) deprived of any 
sense of nationality."96 Education instilled pleasure as a goal in 
life, with elegance, fortune and social prestige as the most 
important values. Physical work and sacrifice was regarded with 
contempt and intellectual work was praised:

To be a lawyer, a physician or engineer was better than to be 
a farmer; a farmer better than a trader or industrialist; an 
educator, journalist or public employee better than an 
employee in manufacturing of a business establishment; a 
schoolteacher, notary clerk better than a mechanic or electri-
cian; such is the aspiration with respect to the different kinds 
of work carried out by human activity.97

Social Inequalities

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, a real 
concern arose in the intellectual circles of the two countries 
about living conditions among the urban and rural population. 
Several essays and novels were published on what was called, 
in such circles, "the social question", meaning simply the 
verification of a growing inequality in the distribution of wealth 
and political power, as well as of opportunities for satisfying the 
most elementary needs. "The unanimous aspiration of mag-
nates is to maintain their privileged position (wrote Valdés 
Cange in 1910) and even if possible to increase their fortune 
with no effort at all; the golden dream of anyone fairly educated 
is to become a magnate, that is to roll in riches thanks to 
another's effort."98

Several authors pointed out the respect for leisure as one of 
the most outstanding characteristics of Chilean aristocracy. To 
live on income was a mark of social prestige. Encina wrote in the 
following terms: "The idle rich man who omits the social duty of 
using all his energies is surrounded by the same respect as is 
the vigorous industrialist or the progressive farmer. Equal con-
siderations are extended to the incompetent or lazy young man 
living at his family's expense as to the enterprising and industri-
ous one."99 While a few people became wealthy, the great 
majority of the population could not satisfy the most essential 
needs. This contrast was thus described by Valdés Cange:

...we have armies, ships and fortresses, cities and ports, 
theatres and hippodromes, clubs and hotels, public buildings 
and promenades, monuments and, what makes us most 
cutewed, opulent magnates, owners of actual domains, 
living in kingly palaces...but not far from the theatres,
gardens and aristocratic mansions, live the people, that is to 
say, nine-tenths of Chile's population, sunk in the most 
frightful economic, physical and moral misery, degenerating 
der under the influence of over-work, bad feeding, lack of sanitary 
habits, utter ignorance and the most rude vices.100

With respect to these problems, Victor Celis says 
"Economic and social questions have a resounding perma-
ience, both exist among us and become more and more 
serious. Codes that legislate only on behalf of capital and 
capitalism, ignoring muscle and labour, a banking regime in 
accordance with such codes and an exemption system of taxes ..."101 Wages were very low. The real salary in Chile 
seems to have declined between 1890 and 1914.102 According 
...to Orrego Luco in 1886: "Where wages drop the soil's produc-
tivity rises, the rent paid by the farmer for the use of land also 
rises, and under such conditions the possessor classes become 
richer while the working classes sink in poverty."103 Twenty-six 
years later, Valdés Cange described a similar situation: "With-
out mentioning the lonely daily worker, on all sides you have 
fairly educated craftsmen wickedly exploited; carpenters, 
masons, blacksmiths, manufacturing operators bound to work 
ten, twelve or more hours a day to receive a salary insufficient to 
cover their needs and those of their family, to say nothing of the 
disabled even if that is a consequence of the work itself."104 But 
not only did the worker receive a scanty salary, he also had to 
cope with a heavy tax. Orrego Luco wrote:

The direct tax maintains the feudal base in all its crude-
ness... It overwhelmingly fell on the small industry and the 
worker, burdening the individual all the more, even as the 
...effort demanded by his occupation grew larger. This exces-
sive tax burden was a new barrier blocking the way out of 
poverty to the man of inferior class, and artificially making 
more painful an economic imbalance which by itself was 
hateful... To tax work and leave capital alone was the 
...supreme principle of the tax regime, a feudal principle which 
we must reverse.105

Valdés Cange analyses the rural situation in the following 
way:

In these states, life has become exceedingly hard for the 
working class and in many cases even unbearable, because 
population has increased disproportionately if compared to 
cultivated land whose growth rate has remained practically 
unchanged, because city life and military service absorb more 
and more agrarian population...thanks to an absurd legisla-
tion that protects the magnates at the proletariat's expense. In 
less than twenty years we have managed to raise the cost of 
living so that the expression "to die of hunger and poverty" 
has ceased in this case to be figurative.106

As a final comment, we shall quote Valdés Cange once 
again. "Perhaps there is no country on earth where differences 
between the high class and the working class are so deep, nor 
any place where magnates' despotism and weak people's 
exploitation exhibit such characteristics as those in Chile."107

Primacy of Santiago

From colonial times, Santiago was the country's main city — 
it's economic, political and cultural centre. In spite of this, 
Valparaiso reached greater commercial importance during this 
period because it was the main trading port even though it never 
achieved autonomy.

Unlike Argentina, Chile was soon aware of the role that 
Santiago would play in the country's political development. The 
problem did not lie with the legitimacy of Santiago as a capital 
city, but rather with what it meant regarding power and popula-
concentration. Thus, through data and testimonies, one 
may detect the resentment of the provinces concerning this fact. 
There are denunciations, like that of Palacios Navarro when he
refers to the excesses committed in the colonization of the south, or of how municipalities and provincial powers were neglected by the central government. There is also Valdés Cange’s denunciation when, travelling over the country, he establishes the wide differences between secondary cities and the capital.

Santiago held a particular influence over the rest of the population during the period. Due to political, economic, and cultural concentration, it was the place chosen by the majority of interior migrants, seeing better chances of work and education there than in other cities. Besides, administrative functions in Santiago attracted a great concentration of professionals and public employees towards the State bureaucracy. Encina referred to this question and he called it “empleomanía” (over-employment), a characteristic of Santiago’s society.

Rural-urban differences seem to have attracted the attention of Chilean authors of the period much more frequently than that of Argentine writers. This constituted a third type of imbalance, in addition to those already analysed.

Until the middle of the last century, Chilean society was essentially rural. The great majority of workers — almost all of them rural — had no expectation nor many chances of change. The inquilino (tenant) did not perceive the difference and contrast between the poverty of his life and the comparative opulence of the urban upper class. With the closing of Australian and Californian grain markets, agriculture suffered a serious crisis and the inquilinos’ sons, no longer able to join the agricultural activities like their fathers, began to look for new opportunities.

A second element that sharpened the agriculture crisis was the destruction of rural craftsmanship that had been developed during the nineteenth century. Palacios Navarro explains such phenomenon in the following terms:

...the countrywoman could help her husband in the daily task of making a living. While the husband was working outdoors, she did spinning, knitting, embroidery...and several other things were manufactured by feminine hands in the Chilean countryside. All these small industries have nowadays been destroyed by foreign competition, and the only resources available to the Chilean labourer’s home are the wages earned by the father of the family.108

The advance of communications opened alternative sources of work to the rural worker, for instance, in the construction of railways, in public works and in nitrate extraction. An important migratory move began towards the cities and other regions, a move that accelerated as communications improved.

The landholder, too, felt the attraction of urban life as a consequence of the value he conferred on a leisurely and wealthy way of living. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, landowners lived in the countryside. Yet towards the end of the century we find them settled in the main cities. This phenomenon was described as “landlord absenteeism”, and according to Encina, it had serious detrimental repercussions on agricultural production and on the quality of the rural labour force, because of the lack of the master’s good example: “The rural worker not only ceased to follow the way towards nobler aims and an easier and more regular life, but he also went backwards morally. He became lazier, drank and lied more, and even became a thief or a bandit.”109

Mclver mentioned another factor that stimulated migration towards populated centres:

The small farmers sold their land at the lowest prices, and searched for shelter in populated centres, because of the lack of security with regard to their property and life. Banditry drives away labourers, the main agent of agricultural production.110

Thus the nomadic workers began to appear, moving across the country in search of jobs.

That vagabond class (wrote Orrego Luco) is the very expression of the economic and social regime to which our haciendas have been submitted, a regime that could only maintain itself for as long as the difficulty of communications would separate the urban from the rural population, and it would naturally fall to pieces once the flow between cities and fields became established.111

One part of this vagabond mass settled in the cities, another began to wander in search of jobs, and the rest emigrated to other South American republics, mainly towards neighbouring ones. The Sociedad de Fomento Fabril referred to this problem in the following terms:

They (the inquilinos’ sons) began to emigrate from the fondos to highway or railway works, or else to the closest city with the aim of getting near the coast, finally joining the uninterrupted human stream which, during 30 or 40 years, has taken away the best of Chilean labour to the mines and nitrate works in the north, to the fields of Cuzco and, in some cases, all along the Pacific coast and the rest of the world...hundreds of Chileans thus carry on their desolate life between Pisagua and the Calle-Calle River, between San Juan and Nequén.112

CONCLUSIONS

The primacy of Buenos Aires and the need to promote alternative centres in Argentina was one of Alvarez’s great themes. The submission of both national culture and national capital to foreign pressures, and its impact on social inequalities and territorial organization was a topic common to all of the writers mentioned in this essay. The imbalance in development between country and city and the impact of new technologies in national life was one of the great themes of Encina, Palacios Navarro and Mclver. Almost all of the authors mentioned were concerned about the future of cities. Social underdevelopment and social inequalities were examined by Valdés Cange and Orrego Luco, by Bialet Massé and the novelists of the time. Finally, Alvarez and Encina wrote passages about regional inequalities that are still valid today. What has happened in the seventy years since Alvarez wrote that “school overestimates the advantages of the locality,” hiding its defects and necessities,” and since Valdés Cange criticised “the utterly bad administration of local and sanitary services which has been felt in every corner of the country, in the main cities and even in the capital”? How are we to attract new immigrants when the large estates denounced by Encina and Valdés Cange and condemned by Sarmiento and Alberdi — despite their contrary positions on other themes — attain new dimensions today? How does one surmount the increasing centralism, commented on by Encina and Alvarez, without falling into the exaggerated localism feared by Moreno and the members of the 1813 Assembly? How do we unite countries between which, in the words of Mallea “all was a matter of division, the art, the idea of nationalism...?”113

Our exploration of regional and urban thought at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century uncovers problems which, far from being solved, have become more acute. Those writers we have examined lived in hard times. Many of them spent long years in exile and political ostracism. A few were born in obscure provincial cities, others in capital cities. Some of them, as Encina, came from latifundist families. Others, such as Palacios Navarro and Sarmiento, were of simple origin. But beyond the advantages and disadvantages

* Alvarez uses the word “pago” whose meaning in Argentina is related to a small and generally homogenous geographical area with a common history and common heritage.
of class difference, facing life with or without the privileges of a
more of less favourable birth, of access to regular learning or to
self-education, all combined writing with action. We are amazed
by their integrated social and territorial vision of great national
more of less favourable birth, of access to regular learning or to

15. J.B. Alberdi, Bases y puntos de partida para la organizaciôn de la


16. The information that would best reveal the difference in standards of life

distribution in relation with the national income; the level of actual wages, the

22. Immigration, between 1886 and 1889, brought up 260,000 new inhabitants,

17. J.B. Alberdi, Bases . . . . p. 83.

18. J.B. Alberdi, Bases . . . . see chapters 14, 15 and 16. The “1837 generation”

19. The topic is treated contemporarily by Robert Schopflocher, Historia de

20. Domingo F. Sarmiento, Mensaje Presidencial, 1868. Sarmiento used the


22. Immigration, between 1886 and 1889, brought up 260,000 new inhabitants,

23. D. Toro, El problema del inmigrante y el problema agrario en la Argentina,

24. José L. Romero, op. cit., p. 175. Romero sets the beginning of the alluvial

25. Antonio J. Perez Amuchastegui, Mentalidades argentinas 1860-1930, (Buenos


27. Ibid., p. 430.

28. Juan Alvarez, Las guerras civiles argentinas, (Buenos Aires: EUEDEBA,

29. The first edition is dated in 1912.

30. Ibid., p. 17.

31. Those years saw an important growth of the areas cultivated with grains —


33. Ibid., p. 32.

34. Joaquín V. González, El juicio del siglo, (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de

35. ibid., p. 85.

36. Rerum Novarum Encyclical, given at St. Peter’s on May 15, 1891, during the

37. ibid., Introducción, pp. 21-25.

38. Ibid., p. 225.

39. ibid., p. 423. Based on the electoral poll for the 1916 election.

40. Rerum Novarum Encyclical, given at Rome on May 15, 1913 during the pontificate of Pius XI.

41. A.E. Bunge, Una inovua Argentina, p. 337.

42. Ibid., p. 339.

43. His real name was Silverio Dominguez, author of

44. Juan Bialet y Massé, Palomas y Gavilanes (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guillermo

45. ibid., p. 29.

46. Ibid., p. 49.

47. ibid., table 23, p. 78 and p. 75 and following.

48. Tables 3


50. José L. Romero, op. cit., p. 175. Romero sets the beginning of the alluvial

51. The topic is treated contemporarily by Robert Schopflocher, Historia de

52. ibid., p. 47.


54. Richard, A. Seymour, Un poblador de las Pampas, (Buenos Aires: Ed. y

55. 1895-1919, Tables 3 and 5, pp. 25 and 34, (Handem, Archon Books, 1966). First published in

56. James Fred Rippy, British Investment in Latin America, 1822-1949, (Buenos


58. James Fred Rippy, British Investment in Latin America, 1822-1949, (Buenos

59. ibid., table 23, p. 78 and p. 75 and following.

50. J.B. Alberdi, Bases . . . . p. 79.

51. J.B. Alberdi, Bases . . . . see chapters 14, 15 and 16. The “1837 generation”

52. ibid., p. 107.

53. Alberdi wrote

54. A few years after Alberdi wrote

55. Ibid., p. 47.

56. Alberdi wrote

57. Alberdi wrote

58. Ibid., p. 79.

59. This description of Argentina’s geographic centre, towards the mid-

60. El Problema del inmigrante y el problema agrario en la Argentina,


62. Juan Alvarez, Las guerras civiles argentinas, (Buenos Aires: EUEDEBA,

63. ibid., p. 17.

64. Those years saw an important growth of the areas cultivated with grains —

65. Reut Roem Novarum Encyclical, given at St. Peter’s on May 15, 1891, during the

66. Elproblema del inmigrante y el problema agrario en la Argentina,


68. ibid., p. 85.

69. ibid., p. 69.

70. ibid., p. 163.

71. ibid., p. 205.

72. The Constitution of 1853 did not define which would be the capital of the

73. The article 3 left the whole issue undecided. The authorities exercising the Federal government had no residence in the city that will be declared the Capital of the Republic by an special law of Congress, after the territory which is to be federalized is ceded by one or more provincial legislatures.

74. Juan B. Alberdi, Bases . . . . p.47.

75. ibid., p. 155.

76. Constitution of the Argentine Nation, 1853, art. 105.

77. ibid., art. 107.

78. Already in the 1850s, Great Britain did not produce enough food for its

79. Alberdi wrote these lines, the first railway was inaugurated in Argentina on August 29,

80. In 1874 the extension of the railroad network reached 1331 km, 2,516

81. 1869, 5,836 in 1885, 13,682 in 1892 and in 1907, 19,430 km.


83. ibid., p. 49.

84. ibid., p. 53. This description of Argentinidad, or “The Republic of

85. ibid., p. 22.

86. ibid., p. 423. Based on the electoral poll for the 1916 election.

87. ibid., p. 225.

88. ibid., p. 421.

89. ibid., p. 429.

90. ibid., p. 337.

91. His real name was Silverio Dominguez, author of

92. Juan Bialet y Massé, Palomas y Gavilanes (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guillermo

93. A.E. Bunge, Una inovua Argentina, p. 337.

94. ibid., p. 339.

95. His real name was Silverio Dominguez, author of

96. Juan Bialet y Massé, El estado de las clases obreras argentinas a

97. ibid., p. 85.

98. Rerum Novarum Encyclical, given at St. Peter’s on May 15, 1891, during the

99. ibid., Introducción, pp. 21-25.

100. ibid., p. 225.

101. ibid., p. 423. Based on the electoral poll for the 1916 election.

102. ibid., p. 85.

103. Rerum Novarum Encyclical, given at St. Peter’s on May 15, 1891, during the

104. ibid., p. 69.

105. ibid., p. 163.

106. ibid., p. 205.

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110. ibid., p. 155.

111. Constitution of the Argentine Nation, 1853, art. 105.

112. ibid., art. 107.

113. Already in the 1850s, Great Britain did not produce enough food for its

114. Alberdi wrote these lines, the first railway was inaugurated in Argentina on August 29,

115. In 1874 the extension of the railroad network reached 1331 km, 2,516

116. 1869, 5,836 in 1885, 13,682 in 1892 and in 1907, 19,430 km.
materials. But soon, in the 1870s, the international food trade became considerably increased when new countries, Argentina among them, incor-
55. Domingo Faustino Sarmento, Obras Completas, tomo XIII, p. 47.
56. In 1869, 1871 and 1873, the locations suggested were Rosario, Villa María, and Rosario again.
57. Juan B. Alberdi, .... pp. 155.
58. Juan B. Alberdi, .... pp. 158.
59. Juan Alvarez, “El asiento de las authoridades nacionales”, chapter IV, on this issue see also Cennerio, Nuestra inferioridad económica, pp. 209-240.
61. Ibid., p. 161-166.
62. Ibid., p. 166.
65. Juan Alvarez, “El asiento de las autoridades nacionales”, chapter IV, El problema de Buenos Aires, pp. 241-267. This chapter contains a good synthesis of the efforts made since 1810 to consolidate or move the site of the federal capital.
67. These intellectual personalities came from different social strata and upheld diverse ideologies. They all coincided, however, in thinking that the country was living a crisis.
68. Enrique Mciver, “Discurso sobre la crisis moral de la República” (Santiago: Imprenta Moderna, 1900). Years later, another Chilean writer, Alberto Cabero, expressed himself in similar terms: “... the unusual wealth degenerated the race’s austerity and everything was changed since then...” Alberto Cabero, Chile y los chilenos, (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1929), p. 45.
70. Vicente Pérez Rosales, Recuerdos.... vol. 2, p. 231.
71. Ibid, p. 239.
72. Nicolás Palacios Raza Chilena, (Valparaíso: Imprenta y Litografía Alemana de G. Schaller, 1904).
73. Ibid., p. 586.
74. Encina, Francisco, Nuestra inferioridad económica, (Santiago: Imprenta universitaria, 1912), and Educación económica y el íeoo. In the first of these works there is a remarkable influence of Palacios.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
80. Francisco Antonio Encina, Nuestra inferioridad económica, (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universitarias S.A., 1955). Originally published in 1911. The author was a member of the National Congress during several periods.
81. Ibid., p. 75. The position of the Sociedad de Fomento Fabril is significant. In its Bulletin of 1885, it denounced the transfer to trade of ships of other nationalities ending up with the building of ships.
82. Enrique Mciver, Discurso sobre...