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Reflexiones sobre la contribución de Solon L. Barraclough a los estudios rurales: algunas impresiones personales

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Resumen

En este artículo se analizan las principales contribuciones que el renombrado economista agrícola SOLON BARRACLOUGH hizo a los estudios rurales, principalmente de América Latina. También se describen aspectos de su vida profesional enfatizando su trabajo con la oficina regional para América Latina de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación (FAO) desde finales de la década de 1950 y en especial con el Instituto de Capacitación e Investigación en Reforma Agraria (ICIRA) en Chile. BARRACLOUGH fue uno de los arquitectos líderes de los famosos estudios CIDA sobre la tenencia de la tierra en varios países de América Latina. Es durante este período que llegó a ser uno de los expertos y activistas líderes en reforma agraria y el empoderamiento del campesinado. Con su nombramiento como director del prestigioso Instituto de Investigaciones de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Social (UNRISD) en Ginebra en 1977 él continuó su compromiso activo con los asuntos rurales y campesinos tales como la seguridad alimentaria y la participación campesina así como también con los problemas del medio ambiente y el desarrollo sustentable.

Palabras clave: reforma agraria, tenencia de la tierra, estructura agraria, estudios CIDA, FAO, ICIRA, campesinos, seguridad alimentaria, agricultura sustentable.

Abstract

This article analyzes the main contributions which the internationally renowned agricultural economist SOLON BARRACLOUGH made to rural studies, particularly in Latin America. It also describes aspects of his professional career highlighting his work with the Latin American

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Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) since the late 1950s and especially with the Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA) in Chile. BARRACLOUGH was one of the leading architects of the CIDA studies on land tenure in various Latin American countries. It is during this period that he became one of the leading experts and advocates of agrarian reform and the empowerment of the peasantry. With his appointment as director of the prestigious United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva in 1977 he continued to be actively engaged with rural and peasant issues such as food security and peasant participation as well as with environmental problems and sustainable development.

Key words: agrarian reform, land tenure, agrarian structure, CIDA studies, FAO, ICIRA, peasants, food security, sustainable

Résumé

Dans cet article on analyse les apports principaux que l'Economiste agricole très connu, Monsieur SOLON BARRACLOUGH a fait sur les études rurales, particulièrement de l'Amérique Latine.

On décrit aussi des aspects de sa vie professionnelle en rapportant son travail avec le Bureau Régional pour l'Amérique Latine des Organisations des Nations Unies pour l'Agriculture et l'Alimentation (FAO) depuis les années 1950 et tout particulièrement avec l'Institut de Formation et de Recherche en Reforme Agraire (ICIRA) au Chili. BARRACLOUGH a été l'un des architectes liders dans les très reconnues études CIDA sur la propriété de la terre dans plusieurs pays en Amérique Latine.

C'est pendant cette période qu'il est devenu un des experts et des activistes leaders dans le domaine de la reforme agraire et la prise de pouvoir des paysans. Par sa nomination comme Directeur de l'Institut de recherche des Nations Unies pour le Développement Social (UNRISD) à Genève en 1977, il a poursuivi son engagement actif avec les affaires rurales et paysannes tels que la sécurité alimentaire et la participation paysanne ainsi que sur les problèmes de l'environnement et le développement durable.

Mots clés: Reforme agraire, propriété de la terre, structure agraire, études CIDA, paysans, sécurité alimentaire, agriculture durable.

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Introduction

SOLON BARRACLOUGH was a socially concerned scholar, consultant, policy advisor, administrator and, above all, public intellectual who had his feet firmly on the ground. He had a great ability to focus on key development issues in his own work as well as set up first class research teams to investigate those issues, inspire their work and marshal the required material resources to undertake these enterprises. While he was not one of the most prolific writers his publications are distinguished by their relevance, clarity, poignancy and deep commitment for improving the livelihoods of the poor, the excluded and the voiceless. He belonged to the generation of outstanding researchers on peasant and agrarian issues such as RAFAEL BARAONA, THOMAS CARROLL, JACQUES CHONCHOL, PETER DORNER, ORLANDO FALS-BORDA, ERNST FEDER, ANTONIO GARCÍA, CYNTHIA HEWITT DE ALCÁNTARA, GERRIT HUIZER, ERICH JACOBY, ANDREW PEARSE, RODOLFO STAVENHAGEN, WILLIAM THIESENHUSEN, DOREEN WARRINER and MARSHALL WOLFE. Most of them were his friends and only few survive him. His rich life-experience led him to the conviction that rural development is basically a problem of the distribution of power and the mobilisation of social forces to bring about the necessary changes for a peasant-based development strategy.

BARRACLOUGH was born in Beverly, Massachusetts in 1922 and was brought up in a family-farm environment in New Hampshire, USA. He began his professional career as a mathematician and physicist having graduated with a BSc. in mathematics and physics from the University of New Hampshire, Durham (NH) in 1943. Largely because of the Wold War Two, where he did his military service in the Philippines and later in occupied Japan, he got interested in development issues and decided to study economics ‘to find out how things really were’. He went to Harvard University from 1946 to 1949 where he was taught by Joseph Schumpeter and Wassily Leontief and received his MA and PhD in economics. For his doctorate he studied under John D. Black and John Kenneth Galbraith. At Harvard he read a book by Joan Robinson, a distinguished economist at Cambridge University, where ‘she

said that the main reason for studying economics is not to be taken in by the economists' (BARRACLOUGH, 1975: 22). He mentions this as he does not think that economists have any solutions to problems any more than any other 'scientists'.

His first work in the rural development field was in the United States as an economist in the U.S. Forest Service. Then he got a job as an Associate Forester in charge of farm forestry aspects of a rural development project and became co-manager of a large cotton, livestock and forest estate which had been donated to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (TN) and had become part of its Agricultural Experiment Station. The estate was largely worked by black sharecroppers and wage workers. BARRACLOUGH was appalled by the poor living conditions of the black sharecroppers and developed various initiatives to improve their welfare but this brought him into conflict with the local authorities, especially with the neighbouring white farmers and the White Citizens Council of Fayette County, who complained that he had raised forestry wages, shortened the work day, introduced incentive payments and similar innovations as well as addressing 'Negroes as Mr. and Mrs'. (BARRACLOUGH, 1965: 108).

The pragmatic engagement and activism of BARRACLOUGH has been stimulated by his grandmother. As BARRACLOUGH (1975: 31) recounts: 'I was brought up in the Calvinist tradition. My grandmother who taught me that tradition said, "Boy, you can't change anything but the worst sin is not to try."' In his case it inspired him to action by seeking to improve the livelihoods of the poor. BARRACLOUGH spent a lifetime working on rural development, with poor landless blacks from the mud of the Mississippi basin in the US to wretched rural labourers in the South, principally in Latin America where he lived and worked for about 18 years from 1959 to 1977 on research and training projects connected with agrarian reform and peasant livelihoods and continued to travel to the region thereafter on consultancy assignments from his base in Geneva.

During his period in Latin America he was based most of the time in Chile from where he travelled to several other countries in the region. His arrival in Chile proved to be a turning point in his life. He was employed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which has its Latin American regional office in Santiago, first as Land Economics Expert for Chile from 1959 to 1961, then as Regional Officer for Land Tenure and Agrarian Policy in Latin America, and subsequently as Project Manager of the Chilean Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA) from 1964 to 1973. Even after leaving Chile, in rather tragic circumstances, he remained deeply attached to its people and concerned about their fate and well-being.

As a consequence of the military coup d'état in Chile, on the 11th of september 1973, he could no longer continue his work in Chile, although he belonged to the UN system and thus had diplomatic immunity. But he had become too involved with the agrarian reform in Chile and thus had become a hate figure for landlords, right-wing politicians and the military. After a brief interlude as consultant of the FAO in Rome, Jamaica and Geneva he became an FAO/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project manager of the National Agrarian Training and Research Programme in Mexico from 1974 to 1977 which he helped to set up. He then was appointed Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva in 1977 where he lived by Lake Geneva, on the French side, for the remainder of his life until 2002. For much of his life he was associated with Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, first as Professor of Agricultural Economics from 1963 to 1964 and thereafter as Adjunct Professor until 1983.

First personal impressions

I retain a vivid image of my first encounters with SOLON BARRACLOUGH back in my student days in Chile in the mid-1960s. At the time I was following a course he was giving on agrarian reform and rural development in the University of Chile in Santiago. We were a small group of students and he asked us to come to his office which was rather spacious. He then was the FAO/UNDP project manager of ICIRA in Santiago. For a professor to give his lectures in his office was highly unusual, if not odd. But so was his teaching method which was informal and interactive, similar to a tutorial or postgraduate seminar in the Anglo-Saxon university system, while we were accustomed to formal lectures. We just put it down, given our provincialism at the time, to the idiosyncrasies of this '*gringo loco*', i.e. this eccentric and rather weird professor from the United States, who also liked to smoke this rather big pipe during the sessions. One day while we were waiting for him to arrive for his seminar we saw this informally dressed man alighting from a large four wheel vehicle (it was a jeep and not a SUV!) wearing boots which were all muddy. Meanwhile we as students were all dressed very formally (in those days I was wearing a suit and tie which I rarely do these days) as were our Chilean professors. This just confirmed our view that he was an odd person. However, I could observe how much he enjoyed doing field work and talking to the *campesinos* which seemed to energize him. It also greatly enriched us as in his seminars he often exemplified some analytical point using examples from his field experience.

Another event which greatly impressed me, but whose significance I only discovered many years later, is that during one of his seminars he talked about values, beliefs and objectivity in social sciences instead of the usual models of

economic growth and agricultural development. He turned to his bookshelf and took out a very fat book which seemed to me to have about 2000 pages. The title of the book was *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* by Gunnar Myrdal. I had read a book by Myrdal on underdevelopment and was surprised to see that he had written a book on the plight of the Afro-American population in the United States of America. It was one of the first books he had written, being published in 1944, well before his well-known writings on the developing world. SOLON BARRACLOUGH turned to the back pages of the book, to what turned out to be appendices, in which Myrdal wrote about valuations, beliefs, facts and ‘hidden’ biases in social sciences as well as presenting his own biases on the topic. I think that Myrdal’s approach to social sciences greatly influenced BARRACLOUGH as he was acutely aware that the conclusions reached in social science analysis are not independent from value judgement and biases. He particularly castigated those economists with their fancy econometric models who pretended to be ‘scientifically objective’ exposing their underlying or hidden biases, premises or prejudices. Today I can only conjecture that he probably came across this fat book (which was largely marketed in a much abridged version which does not have these crucial appendices) not because of his interest in methodology or values in social sciences but because of his early involvement with black people (in those days the term ‘negro’ was in common usage). This is a facet in Barraclough’s life which is not commonly known but which in my view is crucial for understanding his commitment to the plight of the landless and poor peasants in the developing world.

Latin America’s Agrarian Structure

The first major assignment, which brought BARRACLOUGH to wider prominence, was as head of the land tenure project of the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development which is known by its Spanish acronym CIDA - *Comité Interamericano de Desarrollo Agrícola*. CIDA was set up following a resolution by the Punta del Este Conference of 1961 by the Organization of American States (OAS). At this meeting the declaration of Punta del Este was signed by all member states and which recognised the need for land reform. BARRACLOUGH was rapporteur for the sub-commission drafting the declaration on agrarian reform. This conference also launched the Alliance for Progress which was a development aid and cooperation programme largely driven by the newly elected administration of J. F. Kennedy in the USA so as to regain the initiative in hemispheric relations after the Cuban revolution of 1959. The presence and speech by ERNESTO ‘CHE’ GUEVARA, as representative of the Cuban revolutionary government, attracted much attention in this meeting at this

seaside resort in Uruguay. CIDA was a collaborative venture between five international organizations: the OAS, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences, known today as the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The research teams, under the general direction of BARRACLOUGH, produced many lengthy reports on land tenure and development in many Latin American countries which collectively were referred to as the CIDA studies. Each country report was written by an expert and the studies authored by RAFAEL BARAONA on Ecuador, Ernst Feder on Brazil and Marvin Sternberg on Chile are particularly noteworthy. Reports on seven countries were published: Argentina (1965), Brazil (1966), Colombia (1966), Chile (1966), Ecuador (1965), Guatemala (1965) and Peru (1966) followed subsequently by reports on El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Venezuela. The CIDA reports of Bolivia and Venezuela were never published, in the latter case because of political opposition. While the reports of Chile and Mexico were published in book form, the remainder only appeared in a limited offset edition as opposition to their wider circulation developed within the OAS and the US State Department in Washington D.C. in response to pressure from the international lobby of Latin American landlords. Nevertheless the CIDA studies had a major influence on shaping a certain view of the Latin American agrarian question as well as on the design of agrarian reform policies. They revealed the full depth of the peasantry's tragedy as well as the highly unequal and bimodal land tenure system in Latin America. The CIDA studies were used by peasant organizations, activists, progressive politicians and reformist governments to lend scientific weight to the case for agrarian reform legislation.

To this date the CIDA studies remain the most comprehensive analysis ever undertaken on the agrarian structure in Latin America and have proven to be a milestone in rural studies in the region. The excellent article by BARRACLOUGH and DOMIKE (1966) provides a comparative analysis of the seven country studies on land tenure and development. It was published also in Spanish, reproduced in several publications and was widely circulated. It was a path breaking and seminal article which had a major influence on subsequent agrarian studies of the region. BARRACLOUGH (1973) later edited a book on the basis of the various CIDA country reports which provides a wealth of information. It shows that Latin America had one of the most unequal agrarian structures in the world. At one extreme were the *minifundistas* or small subsistence peasant farmers and, at the other extreme were the *latifundistas* or landlords who owned large landed estates. By 1960 the *latifundios* constituted

roughly five per cent of farm units controlling about four-fifths of the land meanwhile the *minifundios* comprised four-fifths of farm units but had only five per cent of the land (*op. cit.*: 16). The middle-sized farm sector was relatively insignificant. Subsequent studies have shown this bimodal characterization to be over-exaggerated as tenants had a significant degree of control over resources within the estates and medium farmers had access to better quality land and were more capitalized. Despite this evidence of greater heterogeneity, Latin America still had one of the most polarized agrarian systems in the world.

The CIDA studies and BARRACLOUGH argued that this agrarian system was inefficient and unjust. On the one hand, *latifundios* underutilized land by farming it in an extensive manner and leaving a significant proportion uncultivated. On the other hand, *minifundios* were wasteful of labour, using too much labour on too little land. Not surprisingly, while labour productivity was much higher on *latifundios* than on *minifundios*, the reverse was the case regarding land productivity. Average production per agricultural worker was about five to ten times higher on *latifundios* than on *minifundios*, while production per hectare of agricultural land was roughly three to five times higher on *minifundios* relative to *latifundios* (*op. cit.*: 25-27). This undisputable evidence was the main economic argument put forward in favour of land redistribution as it proved that this *latifundia-minifundia* land tenure system was a major obstacle to development. The argument was further strengthened with data on the extreme low living conditions of the majority of the rural population and the social and political instability that this poverty and social marginalisation created.

From the 'flower pot' agrarian reform to the social revolution in Chile

In Chile BARRACLOUGH experienced three very different administrations at first the conservative government of JORGE ALESSANDRI (1958-1964), then the centrist Christian Democrat government of Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) and finally the socialist government of SALVADOR ALLENDE (1970-1973). All three governments implemented agrarian reforms which escalated from a few expropriations during Alessandri's 'flower pot' land reform to the expropriation of all large (and even some medium-sized) landed estates regardless of their degree of efficiency during the Allende years. But it was during the Alessandri administration that ICIRA was created with FAO and UNDP co-operation. BARRACLOUGH became its international director in early 1964. Well over half of

the country's agricultural land had been expropriated by 1973 and most of it during Allende's government. BARRACLOUGH became increasingly involved in this process and to some extent even shaped it although always from his position as an international civil servant. During this period Chile was living through major social changes culminating in Allende's social revolution and Pinochet's counter-revolution.

If already during the Alessandri government landlords were enraged with the changes brought about by the land reform it is easy to imagine that they wholeheartedly welcomed the military coup and conspired in the overthrow of Allende's government. The following comment by BARRACLOUGH (1968: 11) is revealing of the changes happening in Chile at the time and which explain the radicalization of the peasant movement: 'In Chile, where a few traditional landlords have recently lost their lands through an extremely modest effort at agrarian reform, do you know what many of them resent the most and would be willing to go to almost any lengths to rectify? It is not the loss of wealth or even land, but that the "campesinos" are no longer humble and deferential'.

ICIRA with its high-powered international staff together with its highly qualified Chilean staff trained hundreds of peasant leaders of the reformed sector (the expropriated farms), so as to improve their administrative capacity of running the newly expropriated estates, as well as hundreds of civil servants engaged with the agrarian reform process. Furthermore, thousands of technicians and *campesinos* had attended short technical courses. ICIRA staff also supported peasant organizations and helped to promote more *campesino* participation in agricultural planning at local and national levels. Furthermore, ICIRA experts gave technical assistance in formulating agricultural policies and programmes to the Ministry of Agriculture and the various government agencies dealing with rural matters. Some of the best research on agrarian and rural matters in Chile was undertaken by ICIRA staff and ICIRA's library was building up one of the best collections on agrarian problems in Latin America. Many first rate books and brochures were published including several by BARRACLOUGH. Among the international staff I recall the Brazilians PAULO FREIRE, AMINO AFFONSO and PLINIO SAMPAIO, who had occupied high government positions in Brazil, in some instances ministerial, before coming to Chile as a consequence of the 1964 military coup d'état in Brazil and some of them were called upon high office again after the restoration of democracy in Brazil in 1985. Other international staff included the FRENCHMEN PATRICK CASTEX and MICHEL LANGAND, the Colombian ANTONIO GARCÍA, the Argentinian JUAN CARLOS MARÍN, the Franco Belgian ARMAND MATTELART, and the British Andrew Pearse, among many others. The Chilean staff was generally younger and included researchers like DAVID ALALUF, JORGE ECHENIQUE, SERGIO GÓMEZ, EMILIO KLEIN,

EUGENIO MAFFEI, ANDRÉS PASCAL, ALEJANDO SAAVEDRA, ALEXANDER SCHEJTMAN and HUGO ZEMELMAN, among others.

With the military coup almost all the ICIRA staff had to go into hiding, seek asylum in foreign embassies and go into exile, in some cases for the second time in their lives. The ICIRA offices and the private houses of most ICIRA personnel were raided, including Barraclough's, and in many cases their books and papers were destroyed or confiscated. After disbandment, the former ICIRA staff retained a high regard for BARRACLOUGH and many remained his friends despite being scattered in different parts of the world. By coincidence BARRACLOUGH was at a conference in Israel presenting a paper on the day of the coup. He could not have imagined the relevance that his paper would have which can be gauged by its title 'Latin American agrarian reform in action: a discussion based upon the Chilean experience'. He was strongly advised not to return to Chile by the FAO headquarters in Rome as he had become *persona non grata*. ICIRA's publication programme was accused of fomenting political subversion and several tons of teaching materials were destroyed, for the most part, literacy materials and pamphlets for training *campesinos*. In the months before Allende's overthrow the campaign by the political opposition against ICIRA intensified being denounced as a centre of Marxist subversion, for using its printing press to publish documents against the armed forces, of using UN vehicles for political agitation and for helping illegal armed subversive groups. These accusations were without any real basis and were made as part of the general campaign against Allende's government and its agrarian reform programme.

To illustrate the rapid changes that Chile was undergoing the following experience by BARRACLOUGH is illustrative. In 1960 while working on agrarian policy in Chile he wrote a memo suggesting reforms in legislation on the use of irrigation water. It was returned with a note by the then Minister of Agriculture saying it was a 'communistic' proposal. But the reforms he had proposed were based on US federal irrigation legislation by a republican administration at the end of the nineteenth century! Ten years later ALLENDE was elected to the presidency supported by the socialist and communist parties. During Allende's government the US administration adopted an increasing hostile attitude which meant that many US citizens were viewed suspiciously by many Chileans. But progressive Chileans made an exception of BARRACLOUGH as they knew that he was on the side of the common people and in a way he was adopted as an honorary Chilean (despite retaining a strong US accent in his Spanish). BARRACLOUGH condemned the US involvement in the overthrow of Chile. He thought that the US government could not separate the real from the rhetoric. 'Shortly before the coup a U.S. diplomat in Santiago expressed his

frustration well when I suggested that the growing US pressures on ALLENDE could be harmful to long-term US interests by encouraging a coup and destroying democracy in Chile. His reply was that only “do-gooders” worry about democracy to the exclusion of other US interests such as protection of US property and military cooperation’. (BARRACLOUGH, 1983: 29) But he realized that the US regime wanted the overthrow of Allende’s government as its success would have contradicted one of the most cherished US tenets about the cold war and the nature of the ‘communist threat’, especially as Allende’s Chilean road to socialism was respectful of the Constitution and the country’s democratic system.

Many years after the coup BARRACLOUGH (1994a: 424) in reply questions as to why the Allende government did not pay more attention to women’s participation and rights in the land reform process recounts that it was not for lack of trying: ‘I accompanied a high Allende government agrarian official to meetings with land reform beneficiaries and listened to him try to convince the peasants to allow women to be full co-operative members. Their reply was invariably something like this: ‘We always have voted for “Don Salvador” (ALLENDE), but if he insists that our wives and daughters neglect their household tasks and children to help run our co-operative, he shouldn’t count on us in the future’.

The remarkable unrisd years

Is it a coincidence that he lived the last years of his life in Geneva? What surely attracted him to Geneva is the possibility of influencing developments in favour of the poor by locating himself at one of the centres of the UN system. I presume he could have gone to work with the FAO in Rome where the Vatican is located. But instead he went to Geneva where Calvinism had one of its major strongholds and which could have reminded him of his Calvinist upbringing. Leaving speculations aside there is no doubt that his directorship of UNRISD in Geneva from 1977 to 1984 was most successful and where he was an inspirational force to an array of international scholars and development practitioners. BARRACLOUGH was a good judge of a researcher’s ability, had a special flair for forming research teams and was able to attract the best talent for his projects. He was a person who inspired respect and confidence for his fairness and firm principles and who encouraged people to develop their talents. His main research focus shifted to a variety of new issues which can generally be encompassed under the broad theme of sustainable development.

After his ‘retirement’ he continued his links with UNRISD as Senior Consultant retaining an office in the Palais de Nations building where UNRISD

is located as well as many other UN institutions. He also undertook many consultancies for a variety of institutions such as the South Commission, IFAD, IIED, ILO, Oxfam, TNI and WWF. As an internationalist BARRACLOUGH was a great believer in the United Nations system as a vehicle for achieving a more equitable and humane world. But he was aware of its limitations and thus suggested reforms. He often referred to RICHARD H. Tawney's (1932) book *Land and Labour in China*, which the ILO and the old League of Nations in Geneva had sponsored, as an outstanding analysis of agrarian problems and as indicating an early concern for social matters by the forerunner of the UN.

At the beginning of his tenure in UNRISD BARRACLOUGH commissioned Andrew Pearse, a former colleague of ICIRA, to write a book on the green revolution (PEARSE, 1980). This drew on the various studies of a multidisciplinary team on the social and economic impact of the green revolution in Africa, Asia and Latin America which UNRISD had undertaken during the first half of the 1970s under the leadership of Pearse. Until this day this is one of the most insightful books to have been written on the green revolution and it clearly influenced Barraclough's view on it. According to BARRACLOUGH the impact of the green revolution was shaped not by the technology itself but by the social and political structure within which it is introduced.

One of Barraclough's first major achievements at UNRISD was the launching of the popular participation research programme which ANDREW PEARSE had proposed and helped to set up as co-director in the late 1970s by resolutely shaping its goals and methodology. Over 20 research reports were published by UNRISD on this key topic during the 1980s well before any World Summit or World Social Forum had begun to focus on social participation and other social issues. While some of researchers on this project were well-established figures most were at the beginning of their career and have subsequently become major figures in their own right. This to some extent reflects Barraclough's ability to spot and foster young talent and he was particularly keen to promote researchers and activists from the Third World. Due to his untimely death in 1980 PEARSE was not involved in the main study which emerged from this major project which was authored jointly by MATTHIAS STIEFEL, who closely collaborated with PEARSE as co-director of the project and subsequently director, and Marshall Wolfe, who BARRACLOUGH had met in Santiago in the 1960s where Wolfe was working for ECLAC doing some pioneering work on social policy (STIEFEL and WOLFE, 1984).

Following his social concerns BARRACLOUGH launched the Food Systems and Society project in UNRISD which was particularly concerned with the issue of food security. Furthermore, his sympathy for the Sandinista revolution

in Nicaragua in 1979 led him to write a report on the food system in Nicaragua (BARRACLOUGH, 1982). He later widens his canvas to Central America reaching the conclusion that the region's historical pattern of economic growth based on a few agricultural commodity exports has led to economic and social polarisation in the region, to high levels of food dependence from the USA and to food insecurity (BARRACLOUGH and MARCHETTI, 1985). For BARRACLOUGH (1996) food security and secure access to land by the rural poor are intimately linked. Thus, to achieve food security it is necessary to mobilise the rural masses so as to undertake major land redistribution, enhance production for the national market and prevent any attempts at destabilisation of the governments who implement such profound transformations. However, based on his experience of Chile and Nicaragua BARRACLOUGH is acutely aware of the dilemmas which policy makers face and which usually restrict their room for action as many events are beyond governmental control. He highlights the complexities faced during a process of profound agrarian transformation by presenting several basic policy dilemmas such as those of participation, accumulation, equity and globalisation.

Subsequently, as many countries in the region get torn by war and violence, especially in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua he co-authors a book which analyses food security issues within the context of a development pattern which is exclusionary and leading to impoverishment (BARRACLOUGH and SCOTT, 1987). But in this study the authors also refer to US government's involvement in the counter-insurgency and the tremendous economic loss and human suffering which results from this intervention. They also advocate a new approach for US policy in Central America which respects a country's right to popular-based national development.

The concern of BARRACLOUGH with food security culminates with his book *An End to Hunger? The Social Origins of Food Strategies* (London: Zed Books) published in 1991. The subtitle is very revealing as it shows Barrington Moore's (1966) influence on his work and emphasizes his search for the social context of the agrarian question. He stresses the determinant role of socio-economic structures and the systemic nature of food insecurity. In contrast with the neoclassical belief that trade and market liberalization will automatically induce growth, alleviate poverty and lead to food security he argues that the opposite is often the case. He exposes the double-standards of US trade policy by highlighting the strongly regulated and controlled agricultural markets in the USA. He maps the livelihood crisis confronting rural populations in the South due to the accelerating dissolution of self-provisioning peasant agriculture and the lack of employment opportunities. He finds the social origins of food strategies in the distinctive historical class formations and alliances of each

country which determine the nature of their state and public policy which is also shaped by external forces. Providing access to resources, particularly land, to the rural poor is a key factor for reducing food insecurity. To achieve this he emphasizes ‘peasant-based’ or ‘popular-based’ national development strategies. But the elimination of hunger and poverty would also require ‘massive resource transfers from North to South, perhaps similar to the Marshall Plan for rebuilding war-torn Europe’. (BARRACLOUGH, 1991: 234) However, to what an extent such a proposal is realistic, as to generate the political will for it is most difficult, remains an open question. Given this proposal and his general commitment to economic security and social justice it is no wonder that he has been described as a 1930s Rooseveltian Democrat.

In his book BARRACLOUGH develops further his earlier analysis of policy dilemmas and adds, most interestingly, some pseudo-dilemmas of institutional change. For example, regarding private versus public property he argues that the debate is simplistic and hides deeper underlying issues as ‘property rights are much too complex bundles of social relationships to be neatly classified as public and private’ (BARRACLOUGH, 1991: 256). On market forces versus central planning he finds that the debates are often equally arcane and irrelevant posing a false dilemma. In his view ‘there will always be state intervention in markets. The issue is how to devise economic policies and interventions to direct market forces towards social goals. ... The issue is never one of intervention versus non-intervention, but what kind of interventions and how much (*ibid.*: 258). He further states that the capitalism versus socialism debate also poses a false dilemma. His closing sentences in the book, which were written just before the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe, deserve to be quoted for the for-and clear-sightedness: ‘Future historians may lump together present day capitalist and socialist systems as interesting minor variants of the same mode of production anyhow. For society to have a better future there will have to be modifications in the international system as well as in national ones. How to resolve these issues poses the real dilemmas’. (*ibid.*: 259)

On method, theory, practice and values

In his writings BARRACLOUGH eschewed grand theories which at times he found esoteric, tautological or not helpful for the immediate task at hand, i.e. a problem which needed to be resolved. He favoured the use of case studies and concrete examples for his analysis, which he often garnered from his own field trips, to illustrate his points. He found that most sweeping generalizations obscure more than they explain and that it was always possible to select data that would support any broad social theory or model. He was most critical

of authors who selected the evidence to support their convictions. Hence he argued that one has to avoid building the conclusions into one's premises. Instead of grand theories he was more interested in understanding how development affected ordinary people in diverse real life situations.

Furthermore, BARRACLOUGH disliked simplistic class analysis and the rather sterile debate concerning modes of production which so captivated many Marxist scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. But he also disliked ideologically prejudiced scholars as shown in his statement that: 'The editors seem to be more concerned with showing that cooperative and collective farming is bad *per se*, than in analysing these problems or, for that matter, in examining how any farming system in a particular context might be rendered more productive, democratic and equitable' (BARRACLOUGH, 1980: 116). Thus to the questions of whether collective farms are better than private farms or whether big farms are better than small farms he answered that it all depends on the time, the place, the situation and the criteria.

As for comparative analyses BARRACLOUGH reasoned that generalisations across countries and regions tend to be misleading as, for example, deforestation processes have to be understood in terms of interactions among time and place-specific processes and institutions with divergent social and ecological contexts. He argued for a pragmatic and nuanced approach to policy and institutional reforms. In his view policy makers should critically analyse proposed policies in specific contexts. Furthermore, there should be no dogmatic presupposition about these benefits and disadvantages associated with particular ideological labels. Consequently, Barraclough's approach to the analysis of social and development problems was evidence-based, pragmatic, non-ideological, unprejudiced and historical as well as context and time specific. Nevertheless later in life he did not shy away from making some sweeping generalizations such as that: 'Socialist revolutions in the twentieth century ... while they were anti-capitalist, anti-establishment movements, they historically have served to speed up the incorporation of these populations into the world capitalist system and perhaps on slightly better terms, they were incorporated otherwise, in some cases not, in many cases, yes'.(BARRACLOUGH, 2002)

BARRACLOUGH was far from being an ivory tower intellectual as he continually sought to influence public policy. He maintained that social researchers had an obligation to use their position to try to influence social outcomes to the advantage of those who were being excluded. He liked to cite approvingly the writings of ROBERT L. HEILBRONER, ERIC J. HOBBSBAWM, KARL MANNHEIM, BARRINGTON MOORE (Jr.), GUNNAR MYRDAL, KARL POLANYI, NICHOLAS GEORGESCU-ROEEN, RICHARD

H. TAWNEY and MAX WEBER, among several others. This reflects to a certain extent some of the intellectual influence over him.

While Barraclough's pragmatism, empiricism, suspicion of grand theories and dislike for academic jargon has many virtues it also has some drawbacks as it limited his theoretical contribution. There is no particular concept or theory that, in my view, one can attribute to BARRACLOUGH. In this sense his legacy is very different to that of ANDRÉ GUNDER FRANK or CELSO FURTADO, for example. But his legacy has certain common aspects to that of RAÚL PREBISCH as both had an ability to focus on key development issues and form high calibre research teams to investigate them. Also both were activists within the UN system and believed that the UN could be a force for good by bringing about reforms nationally and internationally which would improve the human condition. BARRACLOUGH, like FURTADO, FRANK and PREBISCH, was a fierce critic of neoclassical thinking and neoliberal policies as he could witness their negative consequences on people's lives.

His criticism of a book which has become a classic in agrarian studies is very revealing. It is a most perceptive and far sighted critique which reveals his independence of mind and even-handedness as well as illustrating his dislike for jargon and misuse of theory. The book I am referring to is by ALAIN DE JANVRY (1981). It has been reprinted many times and is probably the most cited book on Latin American agrarian issues. It is a book which has become a classic and is perceived as being representative of a dependency and Marxist perspective but which BARRACLOUGH does not see as doing justice to Marx and Lenin or to Chayanov who is often seen as in opposition to them. In Barraclough's (1984: 642) view: 'Lenin or Chayanov and the like may have written in the search of abstract truth, but also they were writing in relation to very concrete policy issues they hoped to influence in a particular time and place. They might have emphasized quite different issues if they were writing on Latin America today'. Furthermore, 'One wonders what useful purpose is served by talking about "junkier" and "farmer" roads in Latin America when neither category really has anything to do with the region. A few genuine "junkies" did emigrate to Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, etc. and there are a few farmers in the region in the English or North American sense. The Latin American social reality, however, is very different and has little to do with either'. (*ibid.*: 643). I, for one, beg to differ having extensively used those categories myself for the analysis of the historical development of the Latin American agrarian system.

In Barraclough's defence I have to clarify that he is not against theory but against a theory that provides the answers before one begins the inquiry. He

also does not approve of the careless use of data which he argues must be used with great caution. He faults de Janvry's use of data which he finds result in misplaced precision and that they 'are often more adornments to his text than part of his analyses'. (*ibid.*: 644). He also critiques de Janvry's belief that peasant farming is inherently less efficient than large-scale capitalist agriculture. In a telling sentence BARRACLOUGH (1984: 649) writes that 'de Janvry's analysis is surprisingly similar to the neoclassical one he criticizes' and that his conclusions, like those of the neoclassical approach 'seem to be dictated more by their premises than by the realities they try to explain'. Certainly nobody would dispute today that the over hundred articles which de Janvry has authored, or more commonly co-authored, since his influential book was published are written within a largely neoinstitutional, if not neoclassical, tradition. It seems that even de Janvry's marxisant phase of the 1970s was a mirage but this is open to controversy.

Conclusions

Barraclough's analysis and advocacy of agrarian reform remained the main thread through his life from his first experience of the injustices of the estate system in the US's Mississippi delta in the mid-1950s, during his stay for almost two decades in Latin America where it was central to his activities and during his UNRISD period where his studies on food systems, food security, the environment and sustainable rural development continued to be centrally linked to the land distribution problem.¹ Although he supported the rights of women and indigenous peoples he did not tackle these issues in his writings.

Until the last years of his live he continued to explore new dimensions of the land reform, such as the role of social actors and the state (BARRACLOUGH, 2001). Thus he viewed the central problem of rural development, poverty eradication and social justice as stemming from the peasantry's lack of access to resources and to land in particular for which agrarian reform was just the first step toward the emancipation of the peasantry and rural workers. For him land reform had become an issue of basic human rights which continued to be relevant in today's age of globalisation, especially as in many countries of the South the land and livelihood problems had become even more acute. Although the World Bank recognised this problem and had put land reform back on its agenda BARRACLOUGH (1999: 38) was critical of the neoliberal land

1 For some of his writings on the environment, see, for example, BARRACLOUGH 1995; and BARRACLOUGH and GHIMIRE, 1995. As for his writings on sustainable rural development, see BARRACLOUGH *et al.*, 1997; BARRACLOUGH 2000; BARRACLOUGH 2005, among others.

policies: ‘There was no evidence ... that effective land reforms could result from “market friendly” policies alone. Registering land titles and facilitating real estate transactions between willing sellers and willing buyers do not by themselves change power relationships in favour of the rural poor. In many situations, such policies are likely to reinforce agrarian structures by providing large landholders and speculators with additional legal protection, while leaving the bargaining power of the poor unchanged or diminished’. Hence he was aware of the difficult task for land reform due to the predominance of neoliberal policies and concluded that ‘prospects for land reform look bleak, but they always do until the process gets underway’. (BARRACLOUGH, 1994b: 21).

BARRACLOUGH donated part of his collection of books and papers to the JOSÉ MARÍA ARGUEDAS library in Santiago which had been set up by his old friend RAFAEL BARAONA and which has been incorporated into Chile’s National Library. Thus in a way BARRACLOUGH returned to Chile, where he had spent probably his most important years of his life and where he will remain in the hearts and minds of many Chileans, especially the *campesinos*. But his legacy has no frontiers and will endure in the lives of all those who benefited from his grandmother’s advice as through his work he certainly enriched the lives of many people in Latin America and elsewhere.

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