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occupied idle estates and won title in some cases. The militant small farmers' movement has won over about one third of the branches of the official trade union structure, but they maintain their own organization as well. [11] Many of the trends discussed here highlight the growing importance of regional peasant organizations. "Regional" is used here to describe a mass membership organization that develops a second "level" of decision-making that links together a large number of villages. In much of Latin America, the principal obstacle to rural development is the entrenched power of allied public and private sector regional elites. They often monopolize key markets, preventing peasants from retaining and investing the fruits of their labor. Regional peasant organizations are often the only actors able to open up these monopolies and to push for more equitable and accountable development policy implementation on the ground. Regional organizations are also crucial for defending freedom of assembly, creating a hospitable environment for further community organizing « an important "spillover effect." [12] There is some confusion in Latin America in the use of the term "democratic" to describe a movement. Sometimes it refers to active political opposition, as part of an effort to make the government more democratic. But this is not the same as being internally democratic. [13] Within communities, informal means of consultation, reproach, and decision-making can help to compensate for weaknesses in "public" channels for participation (i.e., limited involvement in meetings, ethnic and gender bias, largely ceremonial assemblies or flawed electoral processes). Such informal, face-to-face accountability mechanisms are weak in larger organizations.

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## Open Forum

*Q: How can socioeconomic projects and political mobilization of peasants around elections succeed when, in the same community, there is a group that advocates armed struggle?*

*A: In terms of the role of armed conflict in Mexico and Brazil, the attempt to form guerrilla alternatives in the late 1960s and 1970s never got off the ground. But peasant organizations in areas that were hard hit by uprisings armed themselves for self-defense or to go after the sources of particular threats.*

In El Salvador, one reason for the difficulty of integrating socioeconomic and political changes in areas where armed leftists are very strong is that the military has been fairly successful at largely depopulating the areas where the armed left has zones of control. The population that remains in these mountainous regions now is very, very small compared with the population that was there when the group went up to the mountains in the late 1970s after they were obliged to take up arms due to government repression.

There have been some efforts toward creating alternative government structures. There are some survival projects but they have affected a very, very small percentage of the population. Majority of the civilian population who supported the armed left in El Salvador does not live in these zones of control. They live in refugee camps, either inside or outside the country. They work in a factory in Los Angeles, or they live in what are called "repopulated villages." These are villages where the population was forced to evacuate in the early 1980s. The people spent five or eight years in refugee camps in other countries. They have now organized to repopulate these villages. They live under a great deal of tension and stress and are under military surveillance. Their main source of political support has been international alliances. Actually, many cities and towns in Europe and in the United States have formed relationships as sister cities with these small repopulated villages. These international supporters try to maintain a continuous presence in those repopulated villages.

Patient-client relations are very difficult to avoid because I think one of the experiences of post-revolutionary societies has been the resurgence of feudal

and bureaucrat capitalist attitudes and tendencies. It is very difficult to create a truly new democratic political structure with truly horizontal relationships between bureaucrats, whether they are political parties or NGOs, and the peasants. That is why I continue to emphasize the importance of having peasant political power. It is part of the long term process to shift the balance of power, not only within the society as a whole but also between organized peasants and political parties and NGOs themselves. Quite often, the NGOs in Latin America use their international funding to build their own clientele. There are all kinds of NGOs there, just like they are here.

*Q: Are elections opportunities for propaganda or are they meant to be won? How should people's organizations participate in the election process? Should there be new forms of organizations? What kind of technology have POs and NGOs developed in relation to the whole question of electoral participation?*

**A:** The POs and NGOs can serve as alternative poll watchers. Poll watchers do create limits on what the government can do, but there are many levels of fraud. I think an alternative vote count and free access to polling before and after elections are very important.

The electronic media is also very important. The perception of whether an electoral alternative is truly viable has a big impact on people's perception of whether it is worthy to take the risks that are inherent in defending the ballot box. If the media is monolithic in projecting a message that the government is going to win anyway, why bother to take the risk? But if media is pluralistic and there are election laws that give the opposition full access to media, as was true in Nicaragua and in Brazil, then the whole question of viability becomes much easier. If you have poll surveys saying that a particular alternative is becoming a real one, then that really affects people's decision about how far they are going to stick their necks out in situations that are inherently risky as was the case in Mexico.

In Mexico, there have been pockets of problems, but it is only there that fraud has been able to swing the national election. The government banned polling a month before and after elections. This made it very difficult to have clean elections. But what happened in 1988 was that everyone was surprised by how well the left opposition did. The government thought it had the situation pretty much under tight control. It manipulated the voters' registration list, moved balloting places around to confuse people in areas of opposition support, and had very, very strict control of the electronic media. But as the first results from outside the capital began to come in, the government was shocked to find out how well the opposition was doing. They panicked and decided to announce that the computers broke down. They suspended the counting. It took them a week to bring the computers back, and in the course of the week, the results changed. They had this big after-election day fraud. The population closed ranks in opposing the fraud in defense of democracy, above the issue of a particular political alternative. This was before Cardenas had his own party. His people were supporting him as an individual, not because he was particularly charismatic but because he represented an honest leader, a return to the basic nationalist principles or reform principles of the earlier phase of the Mexican revolution.

The bottomline is that it is not clear how much it would have mattered if the

opposition were able to fully monitor all the polling places. They were able to monitor about 80% but most of the fraud were concentrated in the remaining 20% which they were unable to reach. It is probably true that the government would have pushed through with the fraud anyway, but it might have been harder for the government to do that.

Media access is key in terms of really showing or projecting a viable alternative. There is no quick technical fix. It is a long term process of building alternative political counterweights to those old style machines that are so skilled at manipulating the voting process.

*Q: What were some of the processes undertaken by peasant organizations in Mexico and Brazil in order to sustain internal democracy among themselves? What were some of the processes and tactics they undertook to assert autonomy, considering that they are dependent on the NGOs and the political formations for both financial and political directions?*

*A: There is no simple answer. To make a gross generalization, the intellectuals and academics who are concerned about supporting those movements have failed to offer a useful political framework for dealing with the issue of internal democracy. It is something I am trying to work on but I find very little useful literature. The simple and general level answer is that it is not a question of black or white. In any mass organization—whether composed of teachers, doctors, peasants, or politicians, if you simply require a “Yes” or “No” answer to the question of whether it is a democratic organization in a truly full and ideal sense, the answer will almost always be “No.”*

Let us look at the question in a relative context. How much power do the members have? Do the leaders make most of the decisions? How can we really tell whether the members have ceded to the leaders the authority to make the decision? Election is only one of the many ways and often not the best way of delegating authority. Manipulation is so easy for those who are skilled at that. Any outsider who really thinks he knows how internally democratic the organization is, will probably fool himself. The best way to approach this is with a great deal of open-mindedness combined with skepticism.

One of the first lessons that can be derived is that it is not a matter of sustaining democracy. Internal democracy is not a higher state that one reaches and occupies forever and ever. It is a very worthy and important goal but it may never be fully reachable. In the most ideal sense, there is a continual struggle to approach internal democracy. It can be advanced that the challenge involves simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing power—centralizing power to gain force and decentralizing power to share that force. It is inherently a contradictory process, marked by ebbs and flows.

The question now is how to maximize the moves forward when they become possible and how to reverse the setbacks when they happen. This is a problem for all kinds of large mass organizations. It is particularly difficult for peasants, not because of the issue of problem identification, but because they are physically dispersed and have limited access to information on what their leaders are doing. Someone does not necessarily have to know how to read and write to be able to make an informed decision about whether their leaders are representing their interests. The issue is to get access to information about

what their leaders are doing in their name. It is a different question. This has to do with how the organization decentralizes information. It has to do with how the local levels discuss and spread ideas about what the leaders are doing in their name. So there are no models here due to the unevenness of the process.

One of the issues that has been very important in Brazil and Mexico is the process of continual sharing of experience between more consolidated areas and less consolidated areas. This is not because the more consolidated areas necessarily have a recipe for success. The intention is simply to share people from areas where organizing is more incipient such that shifting the balance of forces is possible. Sharing people is possible in practice. It is not something to be taken for granted but I would suspect that it is especially difficult here in the Philippines because of the whole climate of violence, because the human rights situation makes it difficult to share experiences. But I'll say this is one of the ways in which the unevenness problem has been tackled in Latin America.

In terms of the autonomy question, each movement handles it differently. It depends so much on the character of the particular political forces involved. I would say that the most successful experience has been in Brazil. There also has been a shift to real autonomy of the sectoral organizations in Nicaragua, particularly after the election. I understand that the official position of the Sandinistas is that autonomy for the mass movements is one of the issues that they need to rethink after the elections. But the peasant movement has always been the most autonomous of the mass movements in Nicaragua.

In Brazil, the Workers' Party faced a problem. It managed to win power in many cities, both large and small. Then the Party said, "We need to create new structures and channels for popular participation in government." This sounded very good in theory but it turned out to be very complicated. It is not only because it is hard to get 16 million people to attend a meeting, but also because it is an issue that during crisis, there are municipal governments that are unable to deliver all the services that the people need. The Workers' Party serves a people who have had very idealistic ideas about profound transformation. Paolo Freire, for example, is the Municipal Minister of Education for the city of São Paulo. He spends most of his time worrying whether there are enough desks in the classroom. You would think that this is not what he would like to spend most of his time on—paying the teachers salary, the nitty-gritty problems of running the government.

What happens to the social movements when they are called to meetings by the new municipal officials to create new popular assemblies to, for example, participate in planning the municipal budgets? The movements are very skeptical. Even though they are allies of the Workers' Party, they have grown up in a political culture where their autonomy from the state is very important to them, regardless of whether their friends are in the state. This is true particularly when the issue is to participate in the municipal budgeting but the government's message is it can not deliver all the demands. So the Brazilian government is essentially, objectively trying to get the people to help administer their own property. This is not yet attractive to many of the movements. It is a real challenge for the Workers' Party and the municipal governments to find new ways of bargaining with these movements that will lead to a positive result for both. After a lot of challenges and difficulties in their first years, they managed to make a lot of progress.

*Q: When I was in Brazil in 1988-1989, land occupation by landless workers was already widespread. There was a landlord military group that posed very serious threats to the movement. My question is how serious is this threat? I know people are getting killed but how serious is the threat of the landlord organization in terms of driving the peasant movement into an armed struggle?*

**A:** The entire left in Brazil reportedly concluded that armed struggle was not an agenda. In spite of human rights violations, there is a functioning political system in the electoral sphere without significant fraud and with free access to media. The media during election campaigns cannot be bought. People cannot buy ads in the newspapers. Different political parties are given time on TV, an hour every night. So there is a common understanding that strengthening political democracy and the constitutional government is the goal. But there's a lot of debate on how to particularly do this. Now in Brazil, it is not the army that is carrying a war with the workers and their allies in the countryside. It's the local ranchers, the landlords, the local state and the police. Getting the judicial system to punish people has been virtually impossible. Very few people, maybe only two or three have been prosecuted although more than a thousand victims have been murdered. As I have said earlier, there's a response of armed self-defense which is very different from armed struggle as a route to power. It was simply a matter of how to shift, how to contain the landlord threat and the police threat at the local level. They have been very much divided on the issue of the route to political power and the issue of prevention of human rights violation and self-defense in the local level.

*Q: There is now a coming together between the United States and Mexico, especially with U.S. President George Bush pushing liberalization of trade with Mexico. How is that being accepted by the peasant movement because it seems to me that it has a very, very important implication?*

**A:** In the case of Mexico, it used to have a very nationalistic policy to protect the economy—import substitution, industrialization, and a very strong role for the state in agriculture, buying, selling and processing of crops. But liberalized trade has not led to the renewal of investments and the recovery of the economy that the Mexican president needs. Since 1988, Mexico has been undergoing a major economic transformation. It is opening up its economy to world trade and dropping almost all barriers. The president who is very weak politically needs to show this transformation to the world. He put the issue of free trade with the U.S. on the agenda and the US pays lip-service to it as part of its overall free market ideology. But the U.S. isn't really pushing free trade with Mexico in particular. It can only have been initiated from Mexico in order to support the illegitimate government of Salinas who wants to reinforce his situation with this environment. Mexico has already made most of the economic concessions but the U.S. still has barriers in terms of certain key crops where Mexico has a comparative advantage, particularly fruits and vegetables that many Mexican producers would like to export to the U.S.

In terms of the response of the peasant movement, it has been mixed. It depends on what crops people grow. Those people who grow crops, particularly grains like sorghum and soybeans that are being wiped out by the influx of U.S. grain are very upset. U.S. grain is coming in because Mexico dropped its trade barrier unilaterally. The growers will have to look for some kind of proper alternative in the long term but in the short run they are mobilizing and

engaging in mass actions to push the government to put at least some stopgap measures. They want partial concessions. The difficulty for those peasant advocates within the government is how to make concessions that will primarily benefit the small producers instead of benefiting all the large producers as well (because most of these crops are grown by large producers). It is not in the interest of the peasant movement to just subsidize all the producers. It is not politically or economically viable. So the challenge for both the peasant movement and peasant policy advocates within and outside the government is how to develop policies that will specifically direct the benefits to the small producers as opposed to benefiting agriculture indiscriminately.

There are other producers who may not even stand to benefit, as in the case of the coffee producers in Mexico. The small coffee producers are very well organized in relative terms. They are back with the collapse of the international coffee agreement and the Mexican state's withdrawal from its own coffee marketing. Many of them have been able to organize regionally and nationally into a coffee producers federation that has occupied much of the economic space that the government used to occupy. The government had a coffee marketing institute which processed and sold coffee, supposedly to benefit the small producers and to displace the private local monopolists. But this coffee marketing company became more and more corrupt. The government essentially developed a wage relationship with the peasants. They would give the peasants an advance on the purchase price of the crop and it turned into a kind of a neo-capitalist relationship between the state enterprise and the producers. Most of the crops that the government bought were from larger producers and so it was a case where the state intervention in that particular sector was not really benefiting small producers.

What the small producers tried to do was to use their political and economic power to take over the processing and marketing activities that the government had controlled before. Many small coffee producers were not organized and were being left out of this process. But it was one of the processes that is most advanced in terms of combining political and economic power to control production, inputs, credit, processing and marketing. They are also networking with small coffee producers in Central America and the Caribbean to establish their own marketing offices in the United States and Europe. Mexico is already marketing its own coffee brands. Some producers are marketing organic coffee to Europe. They are trying to find alternative ways of taking advantage of increased flexibility in the market. The result will be to benefit the organized producers who are a minority. Unfortunately the majority are losers in the process, but they are already losers.

*Q: I'm interested in the political and economic strength of the peasant in Latin America. Why did you not emphasize how to strengthen the ways to make the peasant organizations in the rural areas strong?*

**A:** There are many different approaches to grassroots and local level organizing, each coming out of particular local, regional, and national experiences that range across a whole spectrum. Beyond the issue of local organizing, my particular concern is to try to deal with the problem of how to build regional, and national political alternatives that could shift the balance of forces. Community level organizing has been around in Latin America but has not added up to truly politically viable regional and national political alternatives

in most places. And that was the particular problem someone called "scaling up" without losing touch with the grassroots. It is not hard to keep in touch with the grassroots if you stay at the grassroots. But then if you go up, there's a change in the balance of forces.

In terms of the issue of providing economic alternatives, the challenge is how to provide economic alternatives in an alternative political process. Old-time political machines have long provided economic alternatives to some peasants and through these mechanisms they have prepared some people to vote with their stomach and to prevent the emergence of a unified political alternative. I would say the challenge for NGOs is finding ways of creating a balance between a truly broad-based economic alternative that does not divide the population and a viable, convincing political alternative that could actually affect the policy environment in such a way as to be able to broaden and spread precisely those economic alternatives beyond a particular concentrated power. Again a question of "scaling up," both economic and political.

*Q: Earlier you talked about building a mass movement around socioeconomic demands and its relation to electoral policies and that mass mobilization does not necessarily translate into electoral victory. Can you elaborate?*

*A: In the early 1980s, Workers' Party activists in Brazil were very successful at building sectoral movements in both urban and rural areas. But they realized that they made a wrong assumption: that socioeconomic support necessarily translates into a party identification. So people were very disappointed at the relatively poor showing at the polls in the early years of 1980s. It was through a process of learning throughout the 1980s about how to combine the defense of the people's socioeconomic interest with political education and a more practical, flexible approach to build an alliance at the local level that they were able to begin to close the gap between socioeconomic mobilization and political and electoral mobilization.*

Another issue that was relevant was at that time, the Workers' Party did not really take the elections seriously. It was still a period of transition from military to civilian rule. The Party was divided on whether to really try to win those elections. But by the late 1980s when they were fully democratic and there was the opportunity to directly elect the President for the first time, much of the Workers' Party united around trying to win. They put more energies in trying to promote what would be a new politics approach to issue-oriented politics, moving away from the old machine-style approach. They were still not focused on winning but on the long term view of building democracy from below as a step toward eventually being able to consolidate democracy from the state.

*Q: In terms of socioeconomic demands, how instrumental are the organizations that are taking part in the political movement in Brazil? I am referring to socioeconomic organizations. Are they distinct or are they just part, for example, of the Workers Party? Do they have separate dynamics that combine socioeconomic welfare at the community level and at the same time have a separate group tackling the political agenda at the higher level?*

*A: In Brazil, they are quite separate. The union movement would have urban and rural branches. About a third would be made up of small farmers and*



some wage workers and the bulk are the industrial workers. The organized industrial workers led the fight for democracy in Brazil in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was the activists from this group that organized Christian-based communities in late 1970s. They formed the Workers' Party from the union. That was what I meant when I said the Party came from the social movements and the sectoral movements.

*Q: You said that in El Salvador, the FMLN is pushing the government to enter into negotiations on a framework for political settlement. Does this mean, first, that the FMLN is willing to work within the framework of the current constitution and the agrarian reform law? Second, if they are willing to work within that framework, what opportunities lie within these two documents that make them more willing to work within that framework?*

**A:** The current negotiating position is that all armies should be demobilized. If there is true demilitarization, that would make free and fair local processes possible. As I understand, the FMLN's negotiating position in this context is to accept the Constitution of 1983 and the Agrarian Reform Law of 1980. But the sequence is not clear. Whether the full implementation of the 1980 reform would be required as a part of the demilitarization process or whether it would have to wait is still being negotiated. Some people are very worried that if they demilitarize first, they will never get agrarian reform.

The 1980 agrarian reform had three parts. Some of it has already been mentioned by Prosterman who was sent by the U.S. in an attempt to divide the peasantry and carry out a classic agrarian reform not unlike the one in Vietnam. However, the revolutionary threat was so strong that to be effective in terms of generating political stability, this agrarian reform has to be quite extensive and benefit a very large percentage of the peasantry. They were quite happy if they would just shoot anyone. They were not so worried about whether they had political stability. So what happened was there were three parts.

The first part involved the government expropriation with compensation of the very large estates which tend to be more inefficient and did not represent the majority of the best lands. The second phase would have covered the large coffee estates of the oligarchy. The third phase which was more conventional and long-run was to give titles to the land to the people who are already working there.

What happened was that phase two, the key phase, was never implemented. In 1980-81, during the first phase, government agrarian reform technicians would go to the farmers and convince them that the estate was theirs. They should then have an election to choose the head of their new cooperative. Then the agrarian reform technician would go away and armed men would come and shoot the head of the cooperative. Then the next head of the cooperative elected would be someone who used to be the manager or the son of the owner and would begin to run that coop in a traditional way.

It turned out that it was an attempt of the government to create a narrow political base as part of the "divide and conquer policy." In the beginning, they had some success in some areas, but because the government did not support the cooperatives, many of these cooperatives broke up with the government and crossed over to the political opposition by the late 1980s. And that is now

permanent. Most of the organizations of cooperatives in this first phase of agrarian reform are now firmly with the political trade union opposition.

The third phase required a great deal of bureaucracy and paper work. That was very risky for the supposed beneficiaries. They had to come down from the mountains and file their papers in the offices.

Overall, between the first and third phases, about 20% of the rural population changed their tenure status in some way. So it was not a trivial reform. In fact, it was a much larger percentage of the population than all of the past Philippine land reform programs put together. But it did not affect a part of the bourgeoisie. It didn't touch the base of their political power. So the FMLN talks about full implementation of agrarian reform. We're talking of phase two, the part that was never implemented. They would have really shifted the distribution of land fairly democratically even though it is within the mixed economy context. The FMLN was thinking in terms of the mixed economy taking into account the difficulties encountered in the Nicaraguan experience. But certainly accepting a basic framework that would lead to a transition to socialism for a small country is simply not on the agenda.

So, essentially, the issue of both agrarian reform and the constitution was not so much the character of the laws but the fact that throughout the 1980s, when these documents were written, the army was killing people indiscriminately. The total number of deaths reached 70,000.

What this might mean is a situation where true freedom of certain organizations, the press and so forth, is up in the air. And the other one is, given those guarantees to compete in the political arena, how to make the transition is very much up in the air. They are trying to study all possible experiences so they could create something new, if possible.

*Q: You mentioned the role of the progressive religious groups in Brazil. I visited Brazil in 1979 and had the opportunity to visit some churches. How effective was the basic community movement in the process of rural democratization? How did the religious community live with the other progressive fronts in the process of rural democratization?*

*A:* The Christian-based communities claimed a key role in laying the political stage for self-organizing in the early 1970s. It is debated how much actual change in consciousness was achieved. The simple political freedom was in itself a major contribution. Whether the consciousness was brought from the outside is something that is debated within Brazil. But certainly, it provided a basis for the activation of the rural union movement. The attempt to democratize the official unions, and provincial landless movement grew to a certain point and eventually reached a plateau. Many activists left the base communities as the political base opened up. They became union organizers, housing organizers, women's movement leaders, or whatever. The basic community movement no longer had to be limited to the Christian-based communities because of the question of their physical security. The political opening decapitated the base movements. Many of the activists moved on to the Workers' Party. This did not mean stopping the organizing of the basic communities per se, but it was no longer their priority. They were organizing on the basis of more direct socioeconomic and political issues.

One of the things that happened in rural movements, particularly in the landless movement, was an attempt to become more autonomous. They could see a kind of paternalistic aspect to the kind of support that some elements of the progressive church in Brazil gave. They no longer wanted to take direction from, for example, the Pastoral Land Commissions that had been key allies in many years. What we have now is an on-going movement to gain autonomy from the progressive church. Just like the autonomy from a political party, there was an attempt to be autonomous from the progressive church. This has caused some friction. Some church activists are confused. They feel hurt and rejected because they do not share the movement's priority in building their own separate decision making structure. There are still many progressive bishops but this development is playing a negative role in the church's capacity to give support.

*Q: In the Latin American experience, do they have a clear-cut definition of "peasant"? What are the groups included in that term? Does it include plantation workers, the rural proletariat? Would it include the minorities in upland areas? In areas where there are coastal fishermen, would they also be included? In the Mexican context, the term "campesino" may also have racial connotations—the local, native Indian population. Is there any working operational definition of the term "peasant"?*

**A:** From an analytical point of view, a peasant is generally defined as a smallholder, whether poor, middle, or rich peasant who does not rely primarily on hired labor. His main source of labor power is the family. The majority of peasants according to that definition in Latin America are not middle or rich peasants. They are semi-proletariats and are obliged to migrate for wage labor. So, in the 1970s the peasants were on the way to being proletarianized. It turns out that the category of semi-proletariats is a very resilient one. The tendency toward complete polarization of classes is not clear and this ambiguous multiple class identity is continuing to be very important. It represents a very large percentage of this core.

Among the landless there is a difference between the temporary migratory workers who often define themselves as "campesino," and the permanent estate and plantation workers. Basically, the issue is where they see their basic source of possible security for the future. Apparently, the estate workers, just like the organized agricultural workers, and trade union wage workers, most of whom are not permanent, full-time also are underemployed wage workers who migrate from harvest to harvest at least in Mexico. In some other countries, I think they often identify themselves as "campesino" because for them, the most viable, imaginable source of security for the future would be to become a smallholder, to become a peasant. They come from peasant families, are children of peasants who were pushed off their lands. They come from a smallholding background. So "campesino" is used very loosely, in terms of the on-going political discourse to refer to the rural poor in general, with the exception of stay-in plantation workers.

On the issue of ethnic indigenous identity, there is a great deal of variation about how people integrate ethnic class and racial identity throughout Latin America. It is very difficult to disentangle because many of the rural poor population are not white, are former slaves in the Northeast of Brazil or members of ancient tribal, indigenous groups of the Andes or Southern Mexico

or Guatemala. But the general trend in terms of the indigenous groups is toward identifying ancestral land issues as distinct from classic class issue. This varies a lot, for example in two countries, Peru and Ecuador, which are next to each other.

In Peru, none of the political parties across the spectrum really address the question for the highland indigenous people. They are specifically ethnic forms of oppression. This is one of the issues that pushes them into the arms of a very violent extremist rebel movement which preys on some indigenous themes as part of the more general rejection of so-called Western civilization. In Ecuador, right to the north of Peru, last June they just had a massive national mobilization of indigenous people who represent about 40% or 50% of the population. This paralyzed the entire country, stopping the traffic in all the major highways, paralyzing major cities. They were pushing issues of ancestral lands and cultural and political rights squarely on the national agenda. They had some very strong church support. They managed to pull this off in a non-violent way.

This is something that researchers from the outside still know nothing about. So we have here two neighboring countries with similar ethnic make-ups: in one the indigenous population is highly politicized and into national mass mobilization; in the other, it is simply not on the agenda. So there is a lot of variation.

*Q: As far as you know, is the FMLN implementing agrarian reform in their base areas?*

*A: The base areas are quite small, both in terms of area and population, largely because of the success of the government's aerial bombardment to depopulate these areas. Those were also the areas of the most marginal lands, so there was not much land to redistribute. Well, for the people who stayed, there was certainly land distributed in very egalitarian ways. But it is not a situation that could be an example of what could be done for the rest of the country.*

*Q: [1] Did media play a pivotal role in the electoral process in Latin America? What part did it play in the empowerment of the rural sector? How would you describe the relationship of media with the NGOs? [2] One important component of people empowerment is popular education, placing emphasis on the rich cultural tradition and history of the people. Could you give us some non-traditional insights that might help us advance popular education work in the Philippines?*

*A: The last two questions come together in terms of the media and popular education. Many of you know that Latin America has produced many experiences, concepts and theories about popular education, many of which influenced national policies at certain times. For example, the Nicaraguan literacy campaign was very strongly influenced by the previous tradition of informal adult education throughout Latin America. I'm sure you've heard of the Brazilian, Paulo Freire, who is now involved in São Paulo.*

But what I was stressing in terms of the media is the issue of reaching very large numbers of people in new, creative and convincing ways. In other words,

it is indeed very important to go small group by small group with all the various creative and successful alternative techniques that have been developed. But how is that going to add up to shifting the balance of forces at the regional or national level? If you're talking about making a leap from consolidated grassroots organizations—or of reaching a vast number of unorganized people who may be sympathetic if they heard the right message—that's when mass media comes in, particularly the electronic media, meaning radio and TV.

I think progressive forces have a lot to learn from the media. In Brazil, the Workers' Party was extremely creative. In Chile also, during the plebiscite against the dictatorship, the democratic alliance was extremely creative in finding very engaging, touchy, creative ways of taking advantage of the way people have learned and absorbed messages from TV and radio. Those techniques were turned to a very positive political end by very creative media people in both Chile and Brazil. So we must be able to project those messages to the unorganized majority in the context of trying to make a broader political alternative credible. I think this is crucial and goes beyond the kinds of informal adult education that we are familiar with.