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### Author

Fox, Jonathan A

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## NEW TERRAIN FOR RURAL POLITICS

BY JONATHAN FOX



Douglas Mansur

**A land occupation by Brazil's Movimento Sem Terra. Ending decades of subordination to urban leftist parties, the rural poor are building their own autonomous political clout.**

**T**HE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT HAS LONG BEEN an active ally of peasants and rural workers in their struggle for survival. But urban-based leftist parties have traditionally viewed peasants as unreliable partners in the worker-peasant alliance that would eventually bring a revolutionary vanguard to power. Moreover, many on the Left have sought to frustrate peasant demands for local autonomy, perhaps the most persistent theme of peasant politics over the centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Many leftists long thought that peasants' near-universal demand for land was "petty-bourgeois," reflecting individualistic desires to become property-owners. The next step was to assume that political "consciousness" had to be brought to them by intellectuals and proletarians. But peasants and rural workers had few external allies to choose from, and at least revolutionaries offered the promise of land, if not democracy. Since the dramatic

*Political scientist Jonathan Fox teaches at MIT and is a member of NACLA's Editorial Board. His book, *The Political Dynamics of Reform: State Power and Food Policy in Mexico*, will be published this year by Cornell University Press.*

political and economic changes of the late 1980s, however, the Left and broader social movements have begun to rethink their relationships with one another. Peasant movements are no exception.

After decades of subordination to their political allies, Latin American peasant movements today are in the midst of a strategic turn toward greater autonomy. For peasants and farmworkers, the issue is not whether to ally with political parties, but on what terms. National political parties aspire to the state's "commanding heights," and rarely emphasize the democratization of the public arenas of greatest immediate importance to the rural poor—the municipality, the police and the rural branches of central government agencies.

With the transition to democracy, one might think that political parties would intensify their appeals to peasants and farmworkers. After all, peasant and farmworker votes can matter even in countries with large urban majorities. In Brazil's historic 1989 presidential race, for example, Lula and the Workers Party won the big cities but Collor clinched victory with the support of the hinterland. In Mexico's 1988 presidential race, rural districts gave Carlos Salinas his official

majority. In many countries conservative rural political machines still have national clout, keeping peasant problems off the agenda.

The relative absence of national political parties in many rural areas has led to the rise of civic movements which have thrust peasants into politics in new ways. Regional civic protest movements in Colombia and Mexico, for example, combine political demands for accountable, representative government with economic demands for regional development investment. When peasant organizations play an overt political role, however, they risk subordinating their long-term social and economic goals to short-term exigencies. In electoral democracies, peasant organizations must make political choices. They can act as an interest group, pursuing their economic interests by playing parties off against one another. Or they can define a public political identity either by allying with an established party or by fielding candidates of their own. But taking on a clear political identity usually means declaring opposition to the government, which may entail sacrificing access to political elites and the resources they control.<sup>2</sup>

The trade-offs peasant organizations face are rarely of their own choosing. Mexico's more consolidated regional peasant movements, for example, can gain access to government resources often only if they renounce their right to participate actively in opposition politics. Even if they abstain from elections but actively denounce officially-sanctioned electoral fraud, peasants in Mexico still put at risk their limited access to government funding for self-managed economic development.<sup>3</sup>

Mexico's left opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) has been less than sympathetic to this dilemma. PRD leaders, especially those who split from the ruling party (PRI), favor the more traditional route of creating a "peasant branch" of the party, rather than developing alliances with the autonomous forces in the peasant movement. Pragmatic peasant politics, known for its synthesis of mass direct action with alternative economic institution-building, often fails to mesh with the tactics of an opposition party geared to winning elections.<sup>4</sup>

The Left's traditional disdain for peasant autonomy is tied up in the belief that political process is less important than economic outcome. In other words, the question of who participates in decision-making is less important than who benefits in the end. The Cuban experience shows that revolutionary states can produce greater economic equality without political democracy. But as Fidel Castro's abrupt shutdown of farmers' markets in the mid-1980s demonstrated, unless peasants have the political power and autonomy to hold governments accountable, chances are they will lose out in the long run. Sometimes this lack of autonomous political clout leads to tragic consequences, as in Nicaragua where thousands of peasants took up arms against the revolution.<sup>5</sup>

**R**URAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS MUST represent diverse economic, ethnic and gender interests. The gulf between those with and those without land looms large. Often the landless are left with at best "indirect" representation by slightly better-off smallholders. This process has led to the emergence of separate autonomous movements of farmworkers and smallholders in Brazil, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chile. More frequently, however, key concerns of the landless, such as land reform and labor rights, simply go un-voiced.

No Latin American country has a farmworker movement powerful enough to set a minimum standard for wages or working conditions.<sup>6</sup> Even Chile, with its long tradition of trade unionism and its booming export agribusiness sector, has few farmworker unions. As of mid-1991, only several hundred Chilean farmworkers were unionized out of a national farm labor force of between 300,000 and 400,000. Vivid memories of past repression make union organizers hesitant to step up their efforts. Chile's new labor legislation excludes the country's largely female seasonal farm labor force, under the ostensible assumption that the small, predominantly male minority of farmworkers employed year-round represent seasonal workers adequately.<sup>7</sup>

Brazil's trade union movement leads perhaps the most ambitious national effort to combine "unity with diversity" in representing the interests of the rural poor. The movement aspires to bring together smallholders, and urban and rural wage workers. The CUT labor federation is well known for its militant industrial base, but one third of its membership is in fact rural, and those on the dangerous front lines of the struggle for agrarian reform, which peaked in the mid-1980s, usually identify with the CUT.<sup>8</sup> Agrarian reform and alternative agricultural policies, however, are not top priorities for the national CUT leadership (nor its ally the Workers Party). Rural unionists formed their own department within the federation to ensure their concerns were heard, but are still frustrated by lack of autonomy and support from the rest of CUT.

The Movimento dos Sem Terra (MST) stepped into the political vacuum left by CUT's limited emphasis on organizing the landless. By the late 1980s, the MST assumed a leading role in radical direct action for land reform. The movement has a partially overlapping, sometimes uneasy working relationship with the CUT Rural Department. Positioning itself outside the "mainstream" of Workers Party politics, the firmly Leninist MST zealously defends its autonomy. With an organized base of up to several hundred thousand, the MST claims to be the main representative of Brazil's millions of landless peasants.

The Brazilian experience shows that broad inclusive organizations can offer a national forum and improved electoral possibilities, but often do not adequately address the diverse needs of the rural poor. In Mexico, by contrast, new kinds of rural organizations are on the rise—ones that lack urban allies and electoral possibili-



Peasants plant corn in Oaxaca, Mexico. The Left pays scant attention to democratizing the arenas of greatest interest to the rural poor: the municipality, the police, and the rural branches of government agencies.

ties, but better represent peasant interests. Eschewing the traditional party-linked pyramids of the Left and the Right known as *centrales*, Mexican peasants are organizing horizontally-structured national networks.<sup>9</sup>

The first such network to emerge was the “Plan de Ayala” National Coordinating Council (CNPA), based primarily among indigenous and sub-subsistence peasants. CNPA’s radical direct action tactics on land and human rights issues brought it briefly to national prominence in the early 1980s. But internal cleavages between party-aligned groups and more ethnic- and local-oriented members soon crippled the organization.

In the mid-1980s a different kind of national network, the National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations (UNORCA), coalesced. It broke with the traditional dichotomy between official and independent groups in peasant politics. Because UNORCA respected the diverse affiliations of its regional members, groups from across the political spectrum participated. Viewing the conventional repertoire of protest as inherently limited, the network chose to combine mass mobilization and pragmatic negotiations with the state. The UNORCA defined itself as “autonomous” to leave the door open to tactical alliances with potentially combative but nominally official peasant organizations, and to distance itself

from opposition political parties whose peasant branches often lacked autonomy.

UNORCA members united around the shared goal of democratizing the rural development policy process, even though each member organization had different policy concerns: some member groups produce wheat, corn, sorghum, timber or coffee; some have credit problems or want higher crop prices; others seek land; and some represent organized consumers in corn-deficit areas. The UNORCA faces the challenge of bridging other deep gaps as well: between mestizos and indigenous peoples, between Mexico’s North and South, and between grain producers and consumers.

Today UNORCA is one of the nation’s principal interlocutors for peasants, representing primarily small producers in the Center and North.<sup>10</sup> Remarkably, it held up under the strain of representing both pro-Cardenas and pro-Salinas groups as well as diverse tactical positions on how to protect basic grains in the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement.<sup>11</sup>

Any effort to combine unity with diversity faces trade-offs between breadth and depth. With respect to representing the economic interests of peasants, Brazil’s CUT is a broader coalition, while Mexico’s UNORCA has greater depth. More challenging still are the questions of how to incorporate autonomous spaces for ethnic and

gender difference, and guarantee democratic participation.<sup>12</sup>

Although mass assemblies can be democratic, any organizer knows that a minority can easily manipulate both information and process. Moreover, as organizations become larger, the distance between leaders and base inevitably grows. The public appearance of active membership may actually be driven by economic incentives, common enemies or coercive “micro-political” pressures. In the Nicaraguan revolution, for example, especially after the war erupted, much of what observers called active grassroots participation was really state-induced mobilization.<sup>13</sup>

Within communities, informal means of consultation, reproach, and decision-making can help to compensate for weaknesses in “public” channels for participation. Only rarely do local village organizations actually make major decisions in mass meetings or through voting. More often, such formal procedures ratify decisions made previously through subtle informal debates and pressures. Formal electoral competition should be understood as one of several possible means for leaders to gain power and for members to hold them accountable. Contested elections may be more the result than the cause (or guarantee) of internal democracy. In many groups, disputes are not resolved through open competition for leadership but rather through a more delicate and indirect process of building community consensus.<sup>14</sup>

External actors often play a crucial role in providing the transportation and political space essential to create horizontal region-wide linkages and bring village representatives together. Whether they are church groups, government, political parties or NGOs, these outside groups often see their key contribution as bringing awareness and organizing skills to the oppressed. For participants, however, the main attraction may well be the truck that comes every Sunday to bring otherwise dispersed community leaders together to a meeting where they will be relatively safe. Participants may already know they are oppressed, and may even have their own organizing skills, but they often lack the resources and political freedom to bring people together from distant communities on a regular basis.<sup>15</sup>

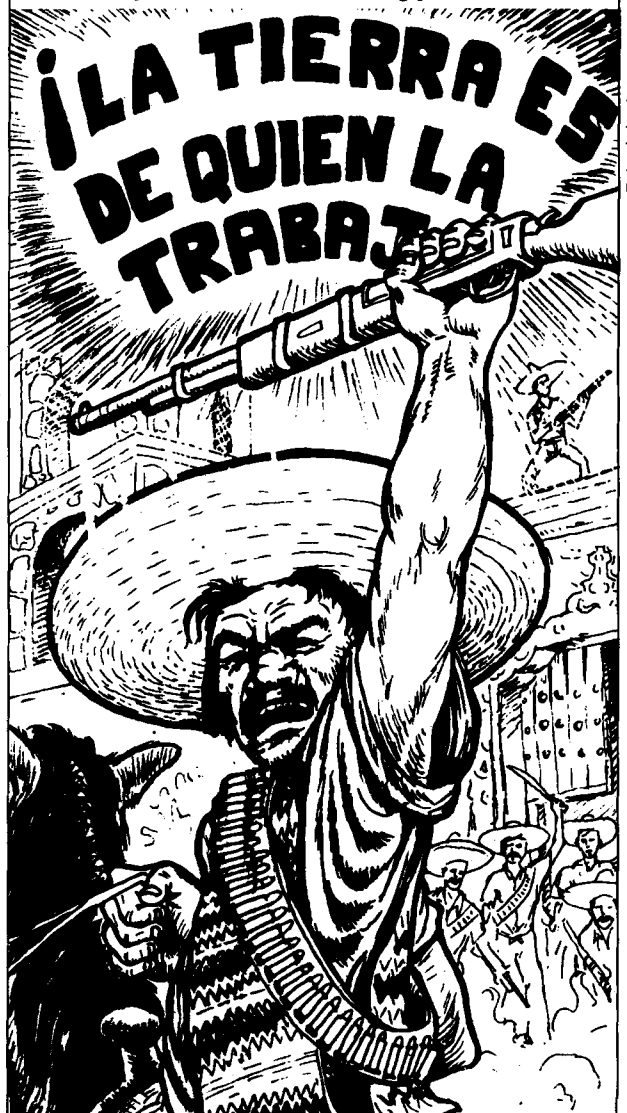
**P**OLITICAL PARTIES HAVE LONG ACCUSED peasant movements of focusing only on local issues. Peasant movements in turn criticize political parties for using them for their own electoral ends. Regional organizations—acting as resistance leagues, development agencies, lobbying offices or local political parties—can often bridge this gap between national and local politics.

At times, regional movements emerge in areas defined by such external factors as the diocese of a progressive bishop, the scope of a reformist rural development program, a climatic disaster such as a drought or a flood, or the prospect of displacement by a public or private sector mega-project. In Brazil, for example, peasants united

across class and ethnic boundaries in protest against planned hydroelectric dams.<sup>16</sup>

Even government anti-poverty programs can create regional opportunities for radical mass organizing. Such was the case with Colombia’s National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) and Mexico’s Community Food Councils.<sup>17</sup> Launched in 1979, these councils deliberately encouraged autonomous mass participation in the management of a new rural food distribution network in Mexico’s most impoverished regions. While most “participatory” programs are limited to providing cheap manual labor for construction projects, the councils brought representatives of dozens of villages together at the regional level, often for the first time, in a common

**“The land belongs to those who work it!” The old Zapatista slogan has yet to lose its vitality, as Latin America’s poor are still overwhelmingly rural.**



Rolando Loubet



**A Brazilian peasant. The Left's traditional disdain for peasant autonomy is rooted in the belief that the democratic process is less important than the economic outcome of policy decisions.**

effort to oversee the government food company. The political space opened from above was often occupied by mobilization from below. In many regions, the councils began to take on a life of their own, refusing to limit themselves to "proper channels" in their struggle for accountable rural development policy. Most of the Mexican Left ignored this movement, since it emerged around mere "consumption" demands, rather than "production."

**T**HE "FREE MARKET" WAVESWEEPING LATIN America is dismantling the wide range of populist and technocratic government agencies that have traditionally been the targets of peasant protest. While the leftist parties by and large have rejected so-called privatization, regional peasant organizations have begun to take over economic tasks, especially marketing and agro-industrial processing, which the state or the private sector previously controlled. For example, Mexico's autonomous, peasant-based National Network of Coffee Organizations (CNO) skillfully combines mass mobilization for concrete policy proposals with sophisticated

economic projects. CNO markets several varieties of coffee directly in the United States (under the brand "Aztec Harvests") and participates in the administration of formerly state-owned processing installations, winning official accolades for efficiency.<sup>18</sup>

This "modern" economic clout can often bring political power. Yet relatively few democratic peasant organizations are sufficiently consolidated to "scale up" to such large operations. Veteran political leaders may lack economic management skills, while capable administrators may not be sensitive to grassroots political dynamics. Leaders who manage to combine these skills still face powerful structural constraints.

Even if more peasants were able to take advantage of international market niches, this is no panacea. Some socially important economic activities, such as basic food distribution in low-income regions, will always require state subsidies. Indeed even when "social sector" economic activities are profitable for an organized minority, the majority who lack an effective voice risk being left out.<sup>19</sup>

The rural poor are on the defensive almost everywhere in Latin America, with the open-ended exceptions of El Salvador and Ecuador. Bloody assaults continue in Peru, Guatemala and Haiti. Where open politics is possible, peasant movements have followed very different paths. Brazil's rural poor have a national political alternative, the Workers Party, which has a powerful voice, but offers peasants few innovative policy alternatives tailored to their specific needs. In Mexico, by contrast, autonomous peasant movements have emerged—perhaps due to the Left's failure to reach out, combined with the state's skilled divide-and-conquer tactics. They have helped to shape the terms of debate about rural development policy and provided real vehicles for change in some regions. But the physical risk taken in challenging the enemies of the rural poor remains high in many regions of both countries.

The trend toward elected civilian rule over the past decade has altered the terrain for both peasants and the Left. If nothing else, it has shown that the Left's traditional dichotomous view that democracy is either "real" or nonexistent leaves out most of the ways people are represented most of the time. During the initial phase of democratization, political attention focused almost exclusively on party politics in the national capitals. Now on the table is the extension of effective citizenship rights to the entire population, including the poorest of the poor, who still tend to be disproportionately rural.

The election of national civilian governments does not necessarily change the micro-politics of local power relations. And the policy space for redistributive rural development policy remains extremely narrow. However, peasant movements are less and less subservient to their urban political allies. Regional networks, in particular, have found new ways to link otherwise dispersed communities, and to advance peasants' struggle for political freedom and economic development. §

consumption (communal kitchens, etc.) at local, regional and national levels; health and education committees; and women's clubs. They have built networks, such as the Women's Federation of Villa El Salvador which María Elena Moyano led for many years and which has 13,000 members.

4. Obviously, not all women in the parties, federations or unions could be considered part of this current, because they don't recognize their own oppression, or because their actions only reinforce the status quo. The most extreme expression of the latter case are the women of Shining Path, whose views on politics and women are very authoritarian and traditional.

5. Maruja Barrig, "Democracia Emergente y Movimiento de Mujeres," in *Movimientos Sociales y Democracia: La fundación de un nuevo orden* (Lima: Desco, 1986).

6. These accusations made a big splash at first, but were soon marginalized as "women's issues," without substantially changing party dynamics or mentality. This occurred, according to Maruja Barrig, because "...the very structure of the Left parties blocked the emergence of a dialogue that could integrate issues of daily life into party militancy." Ibid.

7. Julieta Kirkwood, *Ser Política en Chile* (Santiago: Editorial CLACSO, 1986).

8. Ibid.

9. Virginia Vargas, "Vota por ti Mujer: Reflexiones en torno a una campaña electoral feminista," in *El Aporte de la Rebelión de las Mujeres* (Lima: Editorial Flora Tristán, 1986), p. 55.

10. The IU presidential candidate, Dr. Alfonso Barrantes, did not belong to a party; around him emerged a group of "non-party" or independent leftists. On the congressional slates proportional slots were set aside for the parties and the independents.

11. Interestingly, defense of the right to sexual preference was maintained in IU's program for culture and education—perhaps because a man proposed it, and probably because its inclusion there had a different connotation than it would have had in the program for women.

### Environmentalism: Fusing Red and Green

1. See J. O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* (1988); R. Bahro, *La Alternativa* (Madrid: Alianza, 1980); and O. Ovalles, *La Fuerza de la Ecología en Venezuela* (Caracas: Ecotopia, 1983).

2. See V.M. Toledo, "La Resistencia Ecológica del Campesinado Mexicano," *Ecología Política*, No. 1 (Barcelona).

3. The worst of these was the November 19, 1984 explosion of a PEMEX gas depot in the heart of San Juan Ixhuatepec (known as San Juanico), a town of 70,000 inhabitants located in the industrial zone of Tlanepantla north of Mexico City. This "accident," which killed over 400 and left more than 4,000 injured, gave rise to a struggle for compensation, for the relocation of the industrial park, and for policy changes to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy elsewhere in the country. The recent gas explosions in Guadalajara have already triggered significant protests.

4. A good example was the local community organization in Colonia Hidalgo, in the city of Minatitlán, Veracruz, which managed to transform an unregulated dump into a sanitary landfill overseen by the community and a municipal "ecology ombudsman." And in Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, the workers who labored under wretched conditions picking reusable goods in the municipal dump threw off the yoke of the official union and formed a cooperative. They are now compensated directly without intermediaries, set their own prices, and are learning how to read. The cooperative covers medical expenses and funerals. For an overview of the social-environmental movement in Mexico, see E. Leff and J.M. Sandoval, "Primera Reunión Nacional de Movimientos Sociales y Medio Ambiente" (Mexico: Programa Universitario Justo Sierra, UNAM, 1985).

5. From that meeting two tendencies emerged: the Confederation of Environmental NGOs (COANG) and the Ecology Action Network. P. Quiroga, "La Dimensión Política de la Problemática Ambiental," in *Crisis Ambiental y Desarrollo Económico: Aportes a la discusión en la Argentina*, (Buenos Aires: Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios Ambientales/Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1991).

6. E. La Torre, "Estado, Ambiente y Sociedad Civil en Colombia," in M.P. García Guadilla (ed.), *Estado, Sociedad Civil y Medio Ambiente: Crisis y Conflictos Socio-Ambientales en América Latina y Venezuela* (Caracas: Universidad Simón Bolívar/Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo, 1991).

7. See A. Gunder Frank and M. Fuentes, "Nine Theses on Social Movements," *IFDA Dossier*, No. 63 (1988).

8. Recent studies identified 900 ecology groups in Brazil, 700 in Argentina and over 100 each in Mexico and Venezuela. Most of these are very small and many are not active, but the numbers are indicative of the movement's atomized nature, due in great part to the environmental philosophy which

stresses decentralization and autonomy. For Brazil, see K. Goldstein, "Searching for Green through Smog and Squalor: Defense of the Environment in Brazil," PhD diss., Dept. of Politics, Princeton University, 1990; for Argentina, see P. Quiroga, "La Dimensión Política"; for Mexico, see E. Kurzinger-Wiemman et al., *Política Ambiental en México: El Papel de las Organizaciones no Gubernamentales* (México: Instituto Alemán de Desarrollo/Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1991); for Venezuela, see M.P. García Guadilla, *Ambiente, Estado y Sociedad*.

9. F. Ovejero, "Ecología y Proyectos de Izquierda," *Ecología Política*, No. 2 (Barcelona, 1991). The socialist governments of Latin America have been open to the environmental viewpoint, but their environmentalism has been limited to Nicaragua's defense of natural resources and Cuba's policies of decentralized economic planning. The new democracies are more inclined toward neoliberal de-regulation than environmental management. Although "ecology" has become a mandatory staple of political rhetoric, both socialism and democracy in power remain divorced from the transformatory capacity of environmentalism: democratic participation in the management of environmental resources. See E. Leff, "Cultura Democrática, Gestión Ambiental y Desarrollo Sustentable en América Latina," in *Conferencia Internacional sobre Cultura Democrática y Desarrollo: Hacia el Tercer Milenio en América Latina* (Montevideo: UNESCO/PAX, 1990); J. O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism"; R. Bahro, *La Alternativa*; and O. Ovalles, *La Fuerza de la Ecología en Venezuela*.

10. See E. Leff, "Ecotechnological Productivity: a conceptual basis for the integrated management of natural resources," *Social Science Information*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1986).

### New Terrain for Rural Politics

Thanks very much to Martin Diskin, Mark Fried, Zander Navarro, Ramón Vera, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward for their comments.

1. There are many parallels in the politics of ethnic, racial and gender differences. See especially *Report on the Americas*, Vol. XXV, Nos. 3 and 4 (Dec. 1991 & Feb. 1992).

2. More generally, there are inherent conflicts between social and political representation for the rural poor. First, depending on local political demography, electoral pressures may lead to a blurring of important class, ethnic and gender conflicts, weakening the social organization's capacity to represent its original base. Second, electoral politics may permit social organization leaders to "take off" from their bases and, with the help of new national allies, pursue individual ambitions while leaving their original constituency under-represented. Third, political party competition may introduce ideological divisions into organizations previously united by social and economic demands. Fourth, as social organizations get involved in electoral politics they may endanger their autonomy vis-a-vis political parties even if those parties are their allies.

3. A good example is the Coalición de Ejidos de la Costa Grande, based around Atoyac, Guerrero, one of Mexico's most consolidated, democratic and autonomous regional organizations. Most of the rank and file supported Cárdenas for president in 1988. The leadership, concerned about the long-term survival of their self-managed economic development project, chose to remain non-partisan, knowing the government's unforgiving attitude toward open political opposition. Rank-and-file Cardenista sentiment expressed itself again in the 1989 municipal elections, which led to months of broad-based anti-fraud protests. After a long, drawn-out conflict, a compromise PRI candidate was named to lead a pluralistic municipal council, but the most authoritarian elements in the ruling party struck back again. The state police commander took over the town hall, proclaiming "Aqui traigo mil hombres para dialogar." Meanwhile, PRD leaders bypassed the Coalición in their own closed-door negotiations with the government. While official and opposition party elites pushed the group to define its political allegiance, the Coalición insisted that only by remaining nonpartisan could it defend both its radical economic development project and electoral democracy.

4. The differences between these approaches was especially notable in late 1991, during the national debate over the President's proposal to amend the constitution's land reform provisions. The amendment creates an easy privatization option and opens land-ownership to corporations. These pro-agribusiness measures are justified by a pro-autonomy, anti-bureaucratic discourse which promises to get government off the backs of peasants. The proposal and its "handlers" divided peasant organizations across the political spectrum, including the smaller far left groups, in part because most agree that the heavily state-regulated *ejido* does require institutional change of some kind. Moreover, from the peasants' viewpoint, PRI domination of Congress made the amendment's approval a foregone conclusion. The PRD response came primarily from national leaders who came out of the populist wing of the ruling party. They asserted that the *ejido* system works fine, and all it needs is more funding. PRD leaders further charged that all peasant leaders who

criticized some aspects while supporting others were sell-outs. Indeed, government pressure on peasant leaders to fall in line was intense, straining leadership relations with the rank and file.

5. During the Sandinista government's first years, land distribution excluded individual families, most investment went to the state sector, and the marketing of peasant harvests was governed by coercive, urban-biased policies. Peasants were not involved in formulating national policies and had to behave according to the state's ideologically-driven rules to get land or credit. The popular organizations early on experienced relative autonomy, but by 1982 wartime discipline and the political institutionalization process sapped their vitality. Only when faced with the steady expansion of the Contrás' social base among the rural poor did the Sandinistas begin to redistribute land massively in 1985. See Marvin Ortega, "The State, the Peasantry and the Sandinista Revolution," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (July 1990). See also, David Kaimowitz, "Nicaragua's Experience with Agricultural Planning: From State-Centered Accumulation to the Strategic Alliance with the Peasantry," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Jan. 1988); Ilija Luciak, "Popular Democracy in the New Nicaragua, the Case of a Rural Mass Organization," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Oct. 1987); Luis Serra and Veronica Frenkel, "The Peasantry and Development in Nicaragua," *Annual Review of Nicaraguan Sociology*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2 (1989), and Luis Serra, *El movimiento campesino* (Managua: UCA, 1991).

6. Cuba may be an exception, but I do not know of recent studies of the conditions of rural wage labor in the 1980s. On Cuban peasant cooperatives, see Jean Stubbs, *Cuba: The Test of Time* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1989).

7. See Gonzalo Falabella, "Organizarse y sobrevivir en Santa María. Democracia social en un sindicato de temporeros y temporeras," presented at 47th International Congress of Americanists, Tulane University, July 1991.

8. Small-holders make up about half the rural CUT membership, and the rest are wage workers, sharecroppers, rubber-tappers and homesteaders (sometimes known as "squatters"). The CUT rural base is strongest among smallholders of the far South and parts of the North, and is growing among farmworkers in São Paulo and the Northeast, especially in the sugar industry. The CUT estimates its affiliates account for 14%-20% of the rural unions in Brazil. For overviews, see Candido Grzybowski, "Rural Workers and Democratization in Brazil," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (July 1990); and Zander Navarro, "Democracy, Citizenship and Representation: Rural Social Movements in Southern Brazil, 1978-1990," presented at the 47th International Congress of Americanists, Tulane University, July 1991. For recent movement discussions, see "Assalariados rurais, para onde vai a organização?" *Proposta*, No. 42 (Oct. 1989); "Trabalhadores rurais, fazer nossa a política agrícola," *Proposta*, No. 44 (May 1990); "Sindicalismo no Campo, Os desafios da organização," *Tempo e Presença*, No. 231 (June 1988); "Estado e terra," *Tempo e Presença*, No. 243 (July 1989); "Questão agrária, diversidade e abrangência," *Tempo e Presença*, No. 257 (May 1991); *Cadernos do CEDI*, No. 20 (1989). For a detailed analysis of CUT representation, see *Retrato da CUT* (São Paulo: CUT, 1991).

9. See, among others, Jonathan Fox and Gustavo Gordillo, "Between State and Market: The Campesinos' Quest for Autonomy," in Wayne Cornelius, Judith Gentleman and Peter Smith (eds.), *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures* (La Jolla: University of California, San Diego/Center for US-Mexican Studies, 1989); Neil Harvey, "The New Agrarian Movement in Mexico 1979-1990," University of London: Institute of Latin American Studies Research Paper 23 (1990); Graciela Flores Lúa, Luisa Paré and Sergio Sarmiento, *Las voces del campo: movimiento campesino y política agraria, 1976-1984* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1988); Luis Hernández, "Doce tesis sobre el nuevo liderazgo campesino en México: Notas sobre la UNORCA," in Julio Moguel, Carlota Botey and Luis Hernández, (eds.), *Autonomía y los nuevos sujetos del desarrollo rural* (Mexico: Siglo XXI/CEHAM, forthcoming).

10. In the more indigenous regions of the South, there is a UNORCA-style national network of small-scale coffee producers, the Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Cafetaleras (CNOC). See Gabriela Ejea and Luis Hernández, (eds.), "Cafetaleros: La construcción de la autonomía," *Cuadernos desarrollo de base*, No. 3 (1991); and Luis Hernández and David Bray, "Mexico: Campesinos and Coffee," *Hemisphere* (Summer 1991).

11. UNORCA and CNOC sponsored the first tri-national social movement discussion of agricultural trade issues. See Jonathan Fox, "Agriculture and the Politics of the North American Trade Debate," *LASA Forum*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 1992).

12. Indeed a lesson on how to democratize the peasant movement as a whole can be learned from heeding the example of rural women's movements in Brazil, Chile and Mexico. A recent comparison of the four most important movements in one of Brazil's best-organized rural regions found that the peasant women's movement was clearly the most democratic. It took several

years of patient internal debate within the existing CUT rural unions, the MST and the anti-dam movements for peasant women activists to convince their *companheiros* of the legitimacy of creating an autonomous organization. See Lynn Stephen, "The Gender Dynamics of Rural Democratization: Brazil, Chile and Mexico," presented at International Congress of Americanists, Tulane University, July 1991; Zander Navarro, "Democracy, Citizenship and Representation," and Gonzalo Falabella, "Organizarse y sobrevivir en Santa María."

13. For an especially sensitive exception, see Jeffrey Gould's *To Lead as Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and "Notes on Peasant Consciousness and Revolutionary Politics in Nicaragua 1955-1990," *Radical History Review*, No. 48 (1990). Luis Serra, "Limitado por la guerra: pendiente a futuro. Participación y organización popular en Nicaragua," *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 104 (Nov.-Dec. 1989).

14. Most of the academic literature on social movements sidesteps the question of the degree to which they are actually democratic. For further discussion of the internal democracy issue, see Jonathan Fox, "Democratic Rural Development: Leadership Accountability in Regional Peasant Organizations," *Development and Change*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (April 1992).

15. For an especially striking analysis of political and cultural differences between NGO and indigenous peasant perceptions, see Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal Democracy and Ayllu Democracy: The Case of Northern Potosí, Bolivia," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (July 1990).

16. Brazil's diverse anti-dam movements have developed sophisticated regional, national and international networks. For the results of the first national meeting see "Terra Sim, Barragens Não!" (CUT/CRAB, Oct. 1989). See also "Barragens, Questão ambiental e luta pela terra," *Proposta*, No. 46 (Sept. 1990). Note also regular coverage in the International Rivers Network's *World Rivers Review*.

17. On the ANUC, see Leon Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *The Politics and Ideology of the Colombian Peasant Movement: The Case of ANUC* (Geneva: UNRISD, 1987). On Mexico's Consejos Comunitarios de Abasto, see Jonathan Fox, "Popular Participation and Access to Food: Mexico's Community Food Councils" in Scott Whiteford and Ann Ferguson (eds.), *Harvest of Want: Struggles for Food Security in Central America and Mexico* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); and *The Political Dynamics of Reform, State Power and Food Policy in Mexico* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, forthcoming).

18. After the collapse in international coffee prices in 1989, CNOC's future may well depend on sheer political clout. Sandwiched between the North American Free Trade Agreement and the partial privatization of the agrarian reform, peasants have little political space for agitation. Nevertheless, thousands of Mexican peasants, for the first time, intervened in the foreign economic policy-making process, protesting the government's anti-producer positions in the International Coffee Organization.

19. For important discussions of these dilemmas, see Armando Bartra, "Modernidad, miseria extrema y productores organizados," *El Cotidiano*, No. 36 (July-Aug. 1990); and "Pros, contras y asegunes de la apropiación del proceso productivo," *El Cotidiano*, No. 39 (Jan.-Feb. 1991).

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