

LAND REFORM AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE:

THE MEXICAN AND CUBAN CASES

Brian Loveman  
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For almost half a century the Mexican agrarian revolution has been cited as a model for other Latin American nations to follow. The Mexicans, it appeared, had eliminated the latifundia, eliminated feudalism in the countryside, and carried out a vast program of land reform—all of which are high priority goals of populists, reformers, and revolutionaries throughout Latin America. After its nationalist stage was over, even American diplomats cited the great economic and social progress that the Mexican Revolution made possible.

Since 1959 the Cuban Revolution has also addressed itself to the issues of social and economic change in the countryside, including land reform and elimination of latifundia. To the great distress of American policy-makers the Cuban experience has come to represent an alternative model of "development" for many Latin Americans.

But what kind of rural revolution do these cases represent? Are either of these experiences appropriate models for agrarian reform and political change in rural Latin America? Do the experiences of either Mexico or Cuba have implications for rural political development more generally?

The present essay is an effort to present an overview of change in the countryside in Mexico (1910-1960) and Cuba (1959-1968). Both cases are treated historically, with particular focus on 1) patterns of land tenure; 2) agricultural systems; 3) social stratification and 4) distribution of political power (authoritative decision-making capability with reference to scarce resources) in the pre and post-revolutionary Mexican and Cuban countryside.

A further interest, both empirical and normative, is the differential impact of the revolutionary experience on the various strata of rural population, and especially the degree to which the revolutionary experience provided institutional means to improve the lives of the peasant population (including here agricultural wage laborers, squatters, tenants, and small proprietors).

At the outset I should say that in studying these two cases of rural political change, I have concluded that neither serves as a particularly apt model for the rest of Latin America, for both empirical and normative reasons: Mexico because it was essentially an anti-feudal revolution, in which the peasantry remained largely unincorporated into the national political and economic system even after the Revolution; Cuba, because the island's atypical pre-revolutionary political and social organization in the rural sector, and the island's unique geographical situation have no parallel in the rest of Latin America.

There are, however, some general implications to be derived from both the Mexican and Cuban experiences which may be relevant to efforts at agrarian reform and political change in the rest of Latin America-- and even more broadly, to efforts in non-Latin nations. I have made an effort to extract some of these implications as propositional statements in the concluding section of the essay.

In particular, there are several general issues suggested by the Mexican and Cuban cases which seem to recur in all efforts by governments to carry out agrarian reform. First, what are the political implications of agrarian reform? How does land reform, unaccompanied by complementary organizational, educational and economic support to newly created proprietors, affect the distribution of political power in the countryside? What general inferences, with respect to this question, can be extracted from the Mexican and Cuban cases? The answer to this question seems to be that although land reform (distribution: or redistribution)...may be an effective time-buying device to relieve pressure on political institutions, when it is not accompanied by substantial penetration of government agencies in the countryside, investment in social services, agricultural extension, and the provision of agricultural inputs as well as assistance in marketing, the peasantry remain dependent on traditional rural elites (landlords, merchants, middlemen)--who retain substantial political and economic influence in the countryside. If newly created small proprietors are not politically and economically protected from large-scale or commercial producers, land reform simply provides a temporary palliative by increasing peasant consumption levels--in the short-run.

Second, what kinds of agricultural (production) units should a land reform seek to create? What are the political implications of diverse types of production units? Both the Mexican and Cuban experience point to the need for pragmatism in making decisions regarding the types of production units to be created. There are certain socio-teclmological "imperatives" in the organization of

agricultural production that must be taken into account if output is not to decline, or if it is to be improved. Certain crops are susceptible to small-scale intensive cultivation; others are more suitably cultivated in large, highly capitalized, farms and plantations. Politically, the Cuban and Mexican cases both suggest that large-scale private...production units are incompatible with the level of administrative and economic control of the countryside desired by "socialist" regimes. That is, the ideological bias of socialist thought on this matter seems to correspond to political necessity (when viewed from the regime's perspective). On the other hand, the Cuban experience suggests that small proprietor agriculture is not necessarily an administrative or economic dilemma for socialist regimes, if they are willing to use pricing; credit and marketing policy in addition to ideological "orientation" to obtain their economic goals in the peasant sector. The oft-cited "productive enthusiasm" of the Cuban rural population in the early years of the Castro regime suggests that normative or symbolic incentives, if not sufficient of themselves, can be effectively combined with material incentives in controlling peasant agriculture. Naturally, if programs of rapid industrialization require high levels of sacrifice from the rural sector, peasants may be unwilling to voluntarily accept a decline in their standard of living. Insofar, however, as the regime seeks to increase agricultural output, particularly with reference to labor-intensive crops, the peasant sector can be highly functional. In this sense rejection of small proprietor agriculture (even where it employs wage labor, as in the Cuban case) on ideological grounds may be politically and economically dysfunctional.

Third, what are the political consequences of a reformist-pluralist, or low-level mobilisation strategy versus a relatively high-level mobilizational strategy in carrying out agrarian reform? The results obtained in the Mexican and Cuban cases suggest that an effective mobilization regime allows more rapid and radical institutional change in the countryside than a pluralist or limited-pluralist regime. But the costs imposed on non-favored sectors in a mobilisation system may be quite high; certain favored sectors may benefit greatly. In a low-level mobilization strategy institutional change tends to be more incremental, allowing traditional elites to adjust gradually to the new environment and, in some cases, to "capture" the governmental institutions which, in theory, are promoting change (thus "coopting the Revolution"). To illustrate, in Cuba the peasant-rural worker sector has benefitted substantially from the mobilizational strategy, at the expense of a small number of landlords and foreign companies; in Mexico the non-monolithic nature of the revolutionary leadership permitted rural elites to maintain many of their privileges, although the peasantry did benefit in the short-run from the program of land re-distribution. The Mexican case, in particular, supports Professor Harik's argument that low-level mobilization regimes tend to re-affirm traditional patterns of distribution of power in the countryside;\* On the other hand, the Mexican case also illustrates that low-level mobilisation regimes can, over time, effect substantial political and economic change in the countryside--if not as "complete" as the high-level mobilization system (vis: the great change in patterns of land tenure in r Mexico.)

1. The Mexican Revolution never attained the monolithic leadership or concentration of power associated with the Soviet or Cuban regimes. Thus, in many respects, despite the high level of violence, the Mexican regime's policies represented "reformist-pluralist" tactics more than a high-level mobilization regime.

\* Graduate Seminar, Indiana University, Spring 1969.

With reference to several other issues the Cuban and Mexican cases provide rather ambiguous answers. 1) Which strata among the rural population tend to support a revolutionary movement or respond to calls for land reform? Is it the "middle" peasant, the rural proletariat, the sharecropper, etc? In Mexico the Zapata movement centered in a sugar region, drawing support from peasants who had recently lost their land (or whose fathers and grandfathers had lost land) to commercially-run plantations. In Cuba, however, the relatively large sector of agricultural wage laborers played a minimal role in the Castro movement. The Cuban guerilla forces did receive support (food, shelter, information etc) from peasants in the Sierra Maestra (middle peasants, sharecroppers, tenants) but the peasants did not themselves take up arms. In fact, the level of violence in the Castro movement, and the number of persons involved, was quite low. Did the peasants support the revolution? Certainly the cultivators responded to calls for the elimination of rents, crop-shares, and evictions. But to say that the peasants made the revolution, or knew that a revolution was being made, would be an exaggeration. And if agricultural laborers played a significant role in the Mexican case (if only as cannon fodder), the Cuban rural proletariat is little mentioned in accounts of the guerilla struggle.

2) Can peasants be a "progressive" force after they become small proprietors? (i.e. does creation of a new peasant sector create an inherently conservative class in the countryside?). The Mexican case suggests that a small plot of land is an effective de-mobilizing force on the peasantry. Their demands for land met, the Mexican peasants have been passive for the last thirty years. (Only recently, with increased pressure on the land, have "land occupations" reappeared as current political problems.)

In contrast to the Cuban experience, at least to date, would indicate that small proprietors may be strong supporters of a revolutionary regime, participating enthusiastically in "people's militia" and government educational programs. Admittedly this is not equivalent to "making" a revolution, but it does imply that peasants are not hopelessly counterrevolutionary—at least not always.

3) From what strata does the revolutionary leadership tend to emerge? In the Cuban case, the generally held view that middle-class, urban intelligentsia tend to provide revolutionary leadership is affirmed. Castro, Guevara, et. al. were certainly urban, educated, and at least middle class. But Mexican revolutionary leadership emerged from competing rural elites (landowners, generals from traditional-elite backgrounds). Even Cardenas came from a village background. Admittedly some of these leaders had urban educations, but until 1940 the Revolutionary leadership was not as "bourgeois" as some authors would have us believe.

Keeping some of the general issues above presented in mind, the historical treatment of the Mexican and Cuban cases that follows attempts to present in some detail the pre and post-revolutionary situation in the countryside of these two nations, and the effect of the revolutionary experience on the rural population.



THE MEXICAN CASE

In 1910 the Mexican countryside was characterized by essentially one condition: neo-feudalism. Concentration of landownership and coterminity of land ownership with political power had characterized the Mexican rural sector since the Spanish conquest. From the outset the encomienda, a principle means of rewarding the conquistadores and their armies, as well as establishing Church responsibility for the indigenous population (while making the Church a principal landowner) involved legal and economic responsibility for Indian villages and laborers.<sup>1</sup> Under the Diaz regime (1876-1910) land concentration reached its apex, as the public lands were alienated to land companies and foreign (U.S.) speculators,<sup>2</sup> while Indian villages were swallowed up into the haciendas.

As all those who have studied the Mexican Revolution have noted, any attempt to summarize the land tenure situation at the end of the Diaz regime in terms of distribution of ownership is faced with the difficulty that no comprehensive census of holdings for the period exists. Eyler Simpson in his classic study<sup>3</sup> suggests that three principal forms of land tenure existed in 1910: the hacienda, the rancho, or small farm (less than 1000 hectares), and the landholding village. Relying heavily on George McBride's Land Systems of Mexico,<sup>4</sup> Simpson describes the situation in rural Mexico in 1910 as follows:

1. See N. Whetten (1948) and G. McBride (1923) for brief treatments of the encomienda in Mexico.
2. Hacienda generally means simply a large estate, but in the Mexican context implies a unique, essentially self-sufficient social system within the confines of a neo-feudal estate. Some characteristics of the hacienda are discussed further on in the essay.
3. Eyler Simpson, The Ejido: Mexico's Way Out, 1937.
4. National Geographic Society, 1923.

...the bulk of the land was held by relatively few haciendas, a much smaller area by a relatively large number of ranches, and perhaps a still smaller area by the villages. The exact proportions of the distribution of all rural property between the three forms of tenure is, however, impossible to state....

The figures worked out by McBride on the basis of the 1910 census and certain other sources show that at the end of the Diaz period there were in the Republic a total of 8,245 haciendas. Many of these properties were known to be of considerable extent--thus, it is estimated that 300 of them contained at least 10,000 hectares; 116 around 25,000 hectares; 51 had approximately 30,000 hectares; while 11 are believed to have measured not less than 100,000 hectares each. The aggregate total area of all haciendas in 1910, however, cannot be stated. Nor can any figure be given for the aggregate of the some 48,000 small properties (ranches) which McBride lists for the same year. With regard to the landholding villages no accurate figures are available either for numbers or area for 1910.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the general paucity of data pertinent to the structure of tenure in the countryside in 1910, McBride's estimates do present a rather unambiguous, if non-discriminative, overview of the situation. McBride suggests that in 1910 the rural inhabitants of Mexico who held no individual property were probably more numerous than anytime in Mexican history.<sup>7</sup> According to the data McBride presents (by state, since Mexico is formally a federal system), in only one state (Baja California) was the proportion of heads of families owning property more than 7.7 per cent. In 5/6 of the states this proportion was 5 per cent or less. In other words, in all but five states of Mexico, 95 per cent or more of the rural population was landless--and the highest proportion of rural heads of families owning land in any state was 11.8 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

5. Simpson, *Op. cit.*, 32.

6. F. Gonzalez Roa, *El problema ferrocarrilero y la compania de los ferrocarriles nacionales de Mexico (1915)* estimates the land situation on the eve of the Revolution as follows: (1) state-owned land, 10%; 2) large estates, 50%; (3) small holdings, 20%; 4) communal lands, 10%; (5) waste land, 10%--- total national domain=200,000,000 hectares. (clearly these are rough estimates).

7. McBride, *Op. cit.* 155.

8. Because some communal holdings still existed these statistics may overstate the proportion of landless rural dwellers; but since communal lands were rapidly disappearing the data does seem to reflect the rural situation--at least descriptively if not precisely.

This in a country with an urban-rural population ratio of about 20% urban (villages over 4000) and 80% rural, and a total population of about 15 million persons. Thus, about 11.8 million persons lived in the countryside, the vast majority in villages.<sup>9</sup>

Villages, however, were divided into three principal types: 1) hacierida villages, i.e. those located on private estates; 2) free agricultural villages; 3) mining, fishing, industrial and other miscellaneous types of communities.<sup>10</sup> There exists no data to suggest the proportion of each of these types, but:

The most that can be said on the basis of the data available is that whereas, in the closing years of the Diaz regime there were a few villages scattered here and there in the Republic which could be fairly described as 'free villages'...by far the greater number of the some 69,500 rural communities embracing the bulk of the rural population were for all practical purposes entirely dependent upon the large estates for the means of holding body and soul together. The fact is abundantly clear in the case of the larger number of villages actually located within the confines of haciendas and is hardly less clear with respect to many so-called free villages which either had no land at all or so little and so poor land as virtually to be in the same boat with the acasillado communities? <sup>11</sup> (emphasis added)

<sup>9</sup> According to Simpson, in 1921 (no data available for 1910) around 50 per cent of the total rural population lived in villages of less than 501 inhabitants and almost 70 per cent in communities of less than 1001. Simpson also estimates in 1921 64 per cent of the villages had less than 101 inhabitants and almost 92 per cent were in the class of 1-500 inhabitants. Population centers tended to be small; but in contrast to Cuba, the dispersed homestead was almost non-existent. Mexico was (and is) a country of villages.

<sup>10</sup> Simpson, Op cit, 35

<sup>11</sup> ibid. 36-37.

\* "acasillado", literally those "housed" on the hacienda. This term is used to denote those villages and villagers who lived within the confines of the hacienda and "belonged" to the hacienda social system.

Heavy emphasis has been placed on Simpson's and McBride's descriptions of the Mexican countryside in 1910 simply because no reliable aggregate data exist with respect to patterns of land tenure and rural stratification in pre-revolutionary Mexico. The overall picture, however, seems relatively clear: the hacienda or neo-feudal estate was dominant; a small landlord class was master (in the literal and feudal sense of the word) of the countryside:-

Perhaps the most basic fact about the hacienda was the effort made by the landlords (hacendados) to make their estates self-sufficient. The hacienda, with few exceptions, was not a commercial farm nor a specialized economic unit; haciendas were "settlements in themselves." Political and social entities, the haciendas were farmed extensively by absentee or part-time landlords. As McBride tells us:

The hacendado is...less an agriculturist than a landowner, less a farmer than an absentee landlord, and his interest in his property is due less to its economic possibilities than to its character as an ancestral estate. 14

The acasillados and peones, the internal population of the hacienda, were kept in a state of debt-peonage by a ubiquitous system of advance wages or credit and the "company store" (tienda de raya). In order to keep labor costs low, private and public police forces prevented the rural population from leaving the hacienda until debts were paid. Even migration, thus, was denied to the rural labor force.

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12. There were, of course, regional variations. In Morelos, where the Zapata movement was to be centered, a prosperous capitalist sugar operation had developed. In the north, the arid land was given over to cattle ranches; in the southeast both Mexicans and foreigners produced sisal, coffee and tobacco for export. But whatever the precise figures, the Porfirian era was dominated by haciendas.

13. McBride, Op cit, 27.

14. *ibid*, 29.

In most respects the Mexican countryside in 1910 was a feudal society. Politically, the authority and power of the landlords was in every respect the equal of a feudal baron, even to the fact of private armies and courts. The central governmental institutions generally did not reach past the boundaries of the hacienda. Economically, the hacienda was also the analogue of a feudal estate, farmed extensively with traditional technology. Socially, the hacienda was characterized by the same kind of master-servant relationships (with an administrator or foreman serving as intermediary between landlord and peon) that one associates with a society of social estates--if not castes. This last relationship also implied a certain paternalism on the part of the hacendado, at least minimal responsibility for "his" peones in time of crop failure or family crisis--which protected the peon to some degree.

There were, however, several disjunctions between traditional feudal arrangements and the Mexican hacienda in 1910. First, transportation networks (especially the rapid growth of railroads) linked many of the haciendas to the international economy (mainly through the United States). This was especially true in northern Mexico where cotton predominated, but also of some sugar, grain, cattle and other commercial regions. Secondly, some estates were owned by Americans--and farmed corporately. This meant that the rural economy had a dual character; while hacienda systems **were** dominant, commercial agriculture had begun to penetrate the countryside. Thirdly, many of the estates, haciendas and **farms**, had only recently (in the last thirty to forty years) encroached on the villages whose lands they occupied. This last fact was an important element in the revolutionary movement and the relatively minimal demands of the peasantry (restoration of village lands) in the early revolutionary experience.

Finally, in contrast to a prototype feudal situation, there did exist in Mexico on the eve of the revolution a national government that potentially might restrict the latitude of authoritative action on the part of the landlords. While regionalism remained strong, and private landlord armies were common, Diaz had consolidated the power of the national regime to some extent. The expanded communication networks made possible the movement of federal troops to almost anywhere in the Republic. In an almost classic situation, the central regime was emerging as a potential competitor with feudal, landed elites for political power.

Admitting this potential, however, it remained true that for the large mass of rural population the relevant ("real") government remained personal and immediate: the landlord or his representative. If political power was somewhat diffuse geographically in Mexico (1910) it was highly concentrated socially, generally coterminous with ownership of the haciendas and large ranchos. In sum, then, landless peasants in hacienda-dependent villages was the basic fact of the Mexican countryside before the revolution.

Some basic features of the revolution in the countryside. The history of the Mexican Revolution has been recounted in numerous sources ; there is no need to dwell on the course of events that followed from Madero's challenge to Diaz to the formation of the PNR(the forerunner of the current government party--PRI) in 1929. Suffice it to say that the revolutionary leadership was heavily decimated by assassinations and the countryside in general turmoil for at least two decades. The revolution was violent and costly in lives and destruction of property.

The most important aspects of this period from the perspective of the present comparative essay are five: (1) The revolution was carried out by a series of personalist (upper middle to upper class) leaders who used the peasants<sup>5</sup> desire for land as leverage in their own struggle for control of the government. In some respects the "personalist" character of revolutionary leadership resembles the charismatic personalism of Castro in the Cuban experience. In addition, the original rallying cry of the Mexican revolutionary leaders--effective suffrage and no re-election-- resembles the initial call by Castro for a return to democratic government and free elections. The Mexicans appealed to the liberal constitution of the 19th century, Castro to the liberal Cuban constitution of 1940 . Despite these similarities, however, there is the basic question of what social strata the revolutionary leadership represented. Despite the arguments of some authors that the Mexican revolution had essentially bourgeois leadership,<sup>15</sup> there seems to be some ambiguity on this account. Madero, the initial spokesman for the revolutionary movement, came from a wealthy landowning family; the prominent generals also came from landowning families. And of course Zapata was of peasant origin. Admittedly, as the revolution developed, more "bourgeois" leaders emerged, but even Cardenas came from a village background. In contrast, the most well-known Cuban revolutionary leaders were "bourgeois" both in class background and in educational experience.

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15. A.G. Frank (1963) argues that: "The Mexican Revolution was the product of an alliance between the bourgeoisie.. .and the peasants.... They faced a common enemy, the feudal order and its supporting pillars of Church, army and foreign capital. But their goals inevitably differed--freedom from domestic and foreign bonds and loosening of the economic structure for the bourgeoisie; land for the peasants. Although Zapata continued to press the interests of the peasants until he was murdered in 1919, the real leadership of the Revolution was never out of the hands of the bourgeoisie, except insofar as it was challenged by Huerta reaction and American intervention."

(2) There existed, prior to 1929, no organized and disciplined political party or network of cadres, thus no organizational foundation for the Mexican Revolution. When the PNR was formed, it was created as an institutional means to deal with the crisis of presidential succession--not as an avowed mobilizational tool of the regime.<sup>16</sup> Public programs, including those in the countryside, and especially the land reform program, were carried out ad hoc. This is in marked contrast to the rapid creation by the Cuban revolutionary regime of party and bureuacratic mechanisms to implement the revolutionary program in the countryside. In the Mexican case no program of rural development or comprehensive attack on the problems of the countryside ever developed. The newly created peasant Holdings had little or no organizational, credit, technical, educational or marketing assistance from the central government prior to the Cardenas administration (1934-1940). Land reform meant land redistribution; the peasants were left essentially on their own. Indicative of the relatively low penetration of governmental agencies, and the low level of mobilization in the peasant sector is the fact that in 1958 only 23 per cent of Mexico's population voted in the presidential election--a marked contrast to the high level of participation in all kinds of referendums in true mobilization systems.

(3) The Mexican Revolution had no ideological equivalent to Marxism-Leninism or even to Castro's amorphous commitment to reform (if we accept the notion that his Cuban-Marxist commitment developed after the guerrilla struggle). It is true that the revolutionary leadership appealed to

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16. Padgett argues that the formation of the PNR was an effort on the part of General Calles' to deal with the crisis of presidential succession resulting from the president-to-be's (Obregon) assassination. (1966, 33)



typically liberal-bourgeois principles (free elections, an end to continuisnio), bulwarked by demands for land reform. But effective ideological commitment was lacking. There was no vision of a new society nor even of basic institutional reform. In particular, with respect to the countryside, Ramon Fernandez y Fernandez argues:

In Mexico agrarian reform was not a pacific undertakings nor was it a policy planned for the solution of economic problems. It lacked not only the contributions of intellectuals to point out the best paths to follow, but one may indicate that among the politicians who directed its first stages there was never any intention of doing what was later done. 17

In short, if the revolutionary leaders ceded to village demands for land it was not, in general, due to an ideological commitment, but rather to the fact that the countryside was in turmoil. The first allotments of land were made before any policy or legislation had been enacted, often by "officers" of revolutionary armies and came to be known as "military possessions".<sup>o</sup> The land redistribution or "restitution" was to be carried out in a chaotic fashion--without any national commitment as to type or structure of the country's agrarian sector. All of these features of the Mexican case stand in marked contrast to the important ideological element in *the* Cuban Revolution.

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17. R. Fernandez y Fernandez, in T. Lynn Smith, 1965, 158-153.

18. *ibid*, 159. See also N. Gonzalez Navarro, in C. Veils ed. 1965, vis: "When Venustiano Carranza took up arms against Victoriano Huerta, he did not at first intend his action to be viewed in a social but merely in a political light. Indeed, his agrarian policy reflected the fact that he was an established landowner and old supporter of Porfirio Diaz. However, several of his army commandants took it upon themselves to order the distribution of land, an order which Carranza canceled....Compelled by the impatience of his own military chiefs and by the need to weaken the power of the combined peasant forces of Villa and Zapata...Carranza issued the decree of January 1915. This act, drawn up by Luis Cabrera, was based on the principle that since, because of their backwardness, the Indians had not adapted themselves to private ownership, their claims to communal ownership had to be acknowledged for the time being." (pp 210-211)

(4) The Mexican peasantry in 1910 were isolated from "national" life, unorganized, illiterate, and generally "parochial" with reference to national political institutions. Contact with the urban milieu was limited or non-existent for most of the rural population. In addition, an impartiality sector of the rural population still was "Indian" rather than mestizo in a cultural sense; these were essentially traditional people, relatively less susceptible to mobilizational strategies imposed by criollo elites (except in the limited sense of land occupations) than the more sophisticated Cuban rural proletariat in 1959. As suggested in discussion of the Cuban case below, the Cuban rural population was (before 1959) largely wage laborers and peasants connected to the market economy. Exposure to urban culture and mass media was relatively high; a rural labor movement was at least twenty-five years old when Castro assumed power. Each of these factors made the Cuban rural population in 1959--both psychologically and structurally-- very different from the peasant-serfs liberated by the Mexican Revolution.

(5) The landlord class was threatened, and injured, by the Mexican Revolution--but not eliminated. The hacienda system was eliminated: in this sense a social revolution did occur. But the landowners were allowed to remain in the countryside, with anywhere from 100 to thousands of hectares of land, depending upon their ability to influence local officials or sell off tracts of land to relatives and friends. Agrarian reform was fought in the courts, with bribes, through personal influence, and with violence. It was 1936 (21 years after the first agrarian law) before the first irrigated hacienda was actually affected by land redistribution--and in this instance the landlords were allowed to retain 100-300 hectares along with their farm structures (houses, barns etc.).

This left ex-hacienda owners in the midst of new peasant holdings, often with the best land and control of the Irrigation system--where this existed. While the number of landholders in the countryside dramatically increased, and an old social system was destroyed, political power in the countryside remained in the hands of traditional elites--although seriously challenged by the central governmental apparatus.

Writing in 1937 E. Simpson notes the difficulty faced by villagers claiming land:

The ignorance and inertia of the people, the difficulties of communication, the ease with which the landowners have been able to intimidate the peasants--all have operated to place obstacles in the way of villages obtaining land. 19

While initially land was simply occupied by peasants as "military possessions", the Revolution soon reverted to traditional legal procedures, granting landlords the right to judicial appeal of expropriation and just compensation. The burden of petitioning for land fell on the peasants, who relied on local political leaders to aid them in presenting their claims to governmental officials, or delivered their own petitions and waited for government action. Lengthy papeleo (red tape) meant that several years might pass between the time a petition was presented and when it was acted upon; during which period the ubiquitous pistola settled many claims. The delay involved in acting on the peasants' petition also allowed landowners to dispose of the best land to friends or relatives, leaving the poorest land for the ejido-to-be. The relatively generous legal limits on landholdings, supplemented

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19. E. Simpson, Op cit, 217.

20. This same technique, litigation by pistol, was also used within the land reform communities once land grants were approved as various factions struggled to gain control of the ejido council, thus choice of the best plots. Lack of organizational direction from the central government contributed to the chaotic and violent character of 'politics' within the ejidos, once constituted.

by the land placed *in* the name of relatives, or by the land that bureaucrats were paid to overlook, meant that landowners retained their influence

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and economic importance in the countryside. In the Cuban case, as suggested below, the large landowner disappeared from the countryside; government institutions replaced the landlord and merchant as political and economic influences in the rural sector.

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21. While agrarian legislation in Mexico has been periodically revised the following list of private property not subject to expropriation is indicative of the general orientation of the agrarian program. It must be remembered, however, that there are landholdings that violate the provisions of this legislation and continue to exist. The number and size of these holdings is apparently "classified" information as far as the Mexican government is concerned. No data on this account have been made available to any; scholars studying the Mexican countryside or the history of the revolution.

Legally, private property not subject to expropriation consists of up to: (cited in Mansanilla Schaeffer, 1966, 171)

A. Pequeña propiedad agrícola general  
(general small agrarian property)

1. 100 hectares, irrigated or
2. 200 hectares, seasonal or
3. 400 hectares, agostadero, literally, "summer pasture" or
4. 800 hectares, montes, woodlands or agostadero in arid zones

B. Pequeña propiedad agrícola especial  
(special small agrarian property)

1. 150 hectares, irrigated, dedicated to cotton or
2. 300 hectares, dedicated to the cultivation of bananas, sugar cane coffee, henequen, rubber, coco-palm, grapes, olives, vanilla, cacao or fruit trees

C. Pequeña propiedad ganadera,  
(small cattle ranches)

whose limits are determined by two factors: grazing capacity and a maximum number of 500 head of cattle, or the equivalent in smaller stock. The limit, thus, is "the land necessary to maintain 500 head of cattle."

The Revolution in the Countryside to 1935. Along with the agrarian law of 3-915 and the Constitution of 1917 there are a series of legislative enactments that apply to the Mexican countryside. Because these laws have been quite unevenly enforced, the most useful approach in determining the impact of the Revolution on the countryside is to examine the changing patterns of land tenure and agricultural wealth.

One principal legal consideration should, however, be noted. Mexico maintained a dual system of landholdings: communal (the ejido) and private holdings. No public or state agricultural sector was created. In theory latifundia was outlawed, but the law of "small holdings" provided flexibility enough so that large estates, if not haciendas, were legally maintained. Further, before 1934 peones acasillados (those living on the haciendas) were not authorized to form new centers of population and thus be eligible for ejido grants; even in 1934 these groups were only recognized as new ejidos at their express request and when it was not possible to

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distribute them among neighboring ejidos already in existence. Thus, in some respects, legalities were important--as devices which protected the traditional elites in the countryside.

The Ejido. The principal innovation of the Mexican Revolution in the countryside was the establishment of ejidos. Briefly defined, ejidos are,

...a system of communal tenure modelled on the ancient Indian communities. Ejido lands are held as property of a town or village, either for collective use or for distribution among ejiditarios for cultivation on small plots to which an individual has the right of occupation and use but not of sale or mortgage. The overwhelming majority are of the individual type<sup>24</sup> in which crop lands are worked individually and pastures and woodlands are used collectively.<sup>25</sup>

22. Francois Chevalier, in C. Veliz ed. 1967, 165

23. For an in depth treatment see N. Whetten (1948) Ch: 9 "The Ejido System".

24. Chevalier, Op cit. estimates that in 1960 only 3.2 per cent of the ejidos were farmed collectively. (159).

25. M. Gonzalez Navarro, 1965, 206.

From the outset (until Cardenas, 1934-40) the ejido was seen as a transitional institution, a training ground for the uneducated (and Indian) peasant masses.<sup>26</sup> The ejido was to be a "bridge between the bourgeoisie capitalistic system and the communal system of the future".

E. Simpson, however, whose principal thesis in 1937 was that private property had to "be abolished and the ejidos turned into collective farms, argued that,

In my opinion any and all attempts to distort the collectivistic conception of the ejido cannot be regarded otherwise than as efforts to weaken and eventually destroy the only truly revolutionary thing the Mexican agrarian movement has produced. For it should be obvious that there is nothing revolutionary about an undertaking merely to redistribute landholdings. 27 (emphasis added)

Simpson had a comprehensive plan for reorganizing Mexican agriculture-- something the Mexican revolutionary leadership never developed. Basing his calculations on the vision of a "Mexican countryside of "socialized ejidos", Simpson argued that enough land existed to absorb all of the 3.6 million persons actively engaged in agriculture. Everyone--landlords, peasants, wage laborers, managers--would become ejiditarios. His estimates are based on the 1930 census which shows:

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26. I have been unable to find any materials relating intra-village stratification to land distribution. Legally, all those who had resided in the petitioning center of population for 6 months prior to the date of the census, whose habitual occupation was exploitation of the land by his own personal labor, who did not own in his own name land area which exceeded the parcel awarded to him, and did not possess industrial capital exceeding 2500 pesos were eligible for ejido grants. In fact, personal influence, pistols, and kinship seem to have greatly influenced the process of land distribution. In some cases petty bourgeois--barbers, butchers, small merchants, etc. received land. But since about 95% of the rural population was landless before the Revolution., it is difficult to associate post-revolutionary village leadership with pre-revolutionary stratification patterns. I have seen no studies indicating the pre-revolutionary "class" of those persons who emerged as leaders in the ejido councils. It seems likely that personal and kinship factors--not "class" variables--should be related to the circumstances in each locality in order to understand the process of land distribution and the emergence of local leaders.

27. E. Simpson, Op cit. 512

Land Available	Hectares
crop land	14.5 million (79% semi-arid, 12% irrigated)
pasture land	66.5 million
forests	25.9 million
unclassified	36.0 million
properties less than 1 hectare	100,000

This meant, according to Simpson, that there could be, for each person engaged in agriculture, approximately 4.0 hectares of crop land, 18.5 hectares of pasture and 7.2 hectares of forest--or, since his scheme called for collective cultivation, the 3.6 million persons engaged in agriculture could be divided into ejido communities of 200 households each. This would mean (1930) about 18,000 ejidos, each holding collectively 800 hectares of crop land, 3700 hectares of pasture and 1440 hectares of forest .<sup>28</sup>

Simpson recognized that land and population were unevenly distributed by region, that ejidos would vary in size according to local conditions, and that some units might specialize (for example, ejidos in Chihuahua might devote themselves entirely to cattle ). But he claimed that by making the Mexican countryside over with the collectively farmed ejido as its foundations enough land existed so that both social and economic requirements could be met.

Simpson's vision of the Mexican countryside, however, was incompatible both with the government's commitments to the private sector and with the "reality" of the rural sector in terms of its capacity to offer employment to Mexico's rural population.<sup>29</sup>

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28. *ibid.* 514-515

29 Lesley B. Simpson (*Many Mexicos*, c. 1941, 1964 edition, 320) argues that in all Mexico there existed only 25 million acres of grade-A land (if irrigated).

Further, Simpson himself admitted that,

There is only one point of view *from* which it may be said that Mexico has an insufficiency of land: there is not enough land to satisfy the demands of social justice and economic efficiency and at the same time permit the continued existence of privately-owned and operated farms.

...This is already obviously and notoriously true in the thickly settled areas of the Mesa Central; eventually it must be true for the whole country. 30, 31

In other words, the Mexican commitment to retain an important private sector was incompatible, even in 1935, with any effort to provide land for all the landless peasants. As population pressure on the land increased, and Mexican industry was not able to absorb the sons of the ejiditarios (whose plots cannot be legally subdivided.) the simple fact that not enough land existed for all eligible persons became more clear.

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30. E. Simpson, *Op cit*, 516

31. Two basic assumptions underpin Simpson's analysis: (1) that the central government in Mexico could prepare and carry out a national plan for the agrarian sector ("like the Russians"); (2) that population would remain relatively stable. The second of these assumptions was unjustified in the Mexican countryside in 1937 if only because the death rate from revolutionary violence was subsiding somewhat; but in addition, from 1926-1930 the crude mortality rate in Mexico (average) was 25.5/1000 (32.6% higher than Spain, 53.7% higher than France, 141.5% higher than Uruguay, 116.3% higher than in the U.S.); infant mortality was at the depressingly high rate of 131.6/1000 (E. B. Simpson, *Op. cit.* also notes that from 1940-1950 population increased by six million persons, in 1952 population was increasing at a rate of 3%/annum). It would have been difficult, barring plagues or a new surge of revolutionary violence for the population growth rate to decrease; any improvement in the peasants' food intake resulting from land distribution could only lead to minimal improvement in the survival rate. With respect to Simpson's first assumption (that the government had the administrative, technical and political capacity to carry out the program he suggested) one can only say that the results of the Russian experience were not yet "in", but in any case the Mexican government had neither the ideological commitment nor the political power by which to control the countryside that was available to the Soviets or, later, the Cubans. Local political leaders--"caudillos"--remained powerful elements in the Mexican countryside even after Cardenas' effort to rotate military commanders and thereby deprive them of their "private" armies. Any program of the type and scope envisaged by Simpson would have met with fierce resistance (as it did in the Soviet case), and the outcome could not have been predicted. Besides, all the Revolutionary leaders were large landholders, either before joining the government--or after.



In 1930, fifteen years after the land reform began, 70 per cent of the population actively engaged in the agricultural sector were still landless; in only one state did this percentage drop below 40 per cent, and in 18 states the percentage was between 70-85 per cent. In three states the proportion of landless was still above 85 per cent.<sup>32</sup> In 1937 E. Simpson estimated (1930) there were 1,000,000 ejiditaries, 2,000,000 landless laborers and sharecroppers, and .6 million "others" actively engaged in agriculture. In 1940 49.4 per cent of all persons actively engaged in agriculture were still classified as farm laborers (this is after the massive, redistribution of land during the Cardenas period). The plain fact of the matter is that Mexico did not have enough land to make landholders of the densely concentrated population in the central region; in the less densely populated northern zones commercial crops and livestock on large private holdings involved economic systems which made the only logical alternative to private farms a system of state farms--not collectives or "collective ejides". The Mexican government opted for private enterprise, subsidised by public investment in irrigation and fiscal, stimuli-- a policy which, over the long run, made Mexican agriculture in the aggregate quite prosperous--but destined the ejidal sector to all the social problems associated with minifundia in addition to soil erosion and depletion. Further, the inability of the government to provide extension services, credit, and political protection to the peasants led to the latter's eventual indebtedness to middlemen and landlords. Perhaps a "basic irony of the Mexican revolution is that it created a large-scale commercial agriculture in the private sector that is notoriously successful; while satisfying only the basic demands of the peasants for subsistence plots. In contrast to the Cuban case, the Mexican agrarian revolution produced long-run economic successes--but politically and socially left the peasants at the margin.

The Revolution's leadership was committed not to the ejido as a productive unit (a phrase that became popular after 1958) but to using the ejidos as tranquilizers. They rejected both in theory and by the agrarian policies they adopted any commitment to collectivization or socialization of the rural sector. As early as 1925 the national government (under Calles) passed the "Law of Ejido Patrimony", providing for de jure as well as de facto individual farming within the ejido system. (This in contrast to the Cubans' maintenance of collective or corporate production units wherever possible from 1959 onward.) What elements of leftist intellectuals there were protested this law bitterly--to no avail. Senator Monzon, a leading "communist", declared:

My good friends, there is no bridge possible because these are two separate things: either you cultivate land on the basis of private property or you cultivate on the basis of communal exploitation. Don't talk about bridges;...I like my tamales either sweet or with chile.... 34

Despite the senator's plea, <sup>35</sup> however, the ejido was to become communal property, farmed individually, with the individual peasant facing product and factor market as individual proprietors (except they lacked land titles which made credit more difficult to attain). This situation was somewhat changed under the Cardenas administration, but on a very small scale. <sup>35</sup>

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32. E. Simpson, Op cit, 208

33. N. Whetten, Op cit, 259

34. cited in E. Simpson, Op cit.

35. Even under Cardenas "collective ejidos" were an exception. For a case study see Clarence Senior, Land Reform and Democracy, University of Florida Press, 1958. The case Senior presents looks more like corporate farming or even a state farm than a "collective"--despite efforts to institute a point system for labor performed etc. The "collective ejido" took over lands expropriated from commercial cotton producers; a large amount of credit is provided by an American corporation (which also buys the crop).

With reference to the role that the Revolution's leadership felt the ejido might play in the countryside Chevalier remarks:

Without daring to admit it, most members of the government, brought up in the liberal tradition, considered the ejido as a kind of makeshift solution, a mere stags of development which brought no hope of economic progress, a compromise made necessary by circumstances and serving to convert to the system of peasant small holdings those pueblos still so bound up with their community traditions that the 1917 Constitution refers to them as corporations. 36

In 1923 the government allocated 4-8 hectares to the individual ejiditarios and 2S-1Q0 hectares to the small holders; the reason being that "the ejiditarios would be more or less satisfied and would be able to grow enough to feed his family, while the small holder would produce for sale as well." <sup>37</sup>

In addition to the pessimistic view the government took of the ejidos, despite the appropriate revolutionary rhetoric, the Revolution's leadership favored private landholders by every means possible., while keeping the pace and quality of land with which ejido communities were created to a minimum. The National Agricultural Bank, which favored the private sector, was created (1926) before any institution to provide for the credit needs of the ejiditarios (Banco Nacional do Credito Ejidal, 1936), The ejiditarios were left to fend for themselves, to subsist. In 1930 ejidal capital in hydraulic works (irrigation) represented only 4 per cent of the national investment in this area. Taxes on privately held agricultural land were almost non-existent, reducing the potential for state investment in the agrarian reform and perpetuating the position of the landed elites in the countryside. <sup>39</sup>

36. Chevalier, Op cit, 166

37. *ibid.*

38. Carlos Tello, *La Tenencia de la Tierra en Mexico*, 1968, 77.

39. *ibid.*

By 1930 General Calles (the "Supreme Chief of the Revolution") was quoted as saying:

It is interesting to observe the great number of ejidos in which the land is not cultivated; and still, it is proposed to enlarge these ejidos. Why? If the ejido is a failure it is useless to enlarge it. If, on the other hand, the ejido is a success then it ought to have money to buy the additional land needed and thus relieve the nation of further costs and promises to pay. ...We must then give guarantees to everybody, little and big agriculturalists [alike] so that initiative and private and public credit will be revived. 40

All in all, the ejido was the worst of two worlds--both in terms of efficient agricultural production and in terms of long-term improvement in the position of the peasantry. It cannot be denied that the bonds of serfdom were broken by the Revolution, but the peasant remained economically dependent on merchants, landlords, and middlemen. Political power in the countryside remained in the hands of traditional rural elites, supplemented by government bureaucrats and politicians. The ejiditarios remained dependent on the large estates for supplementary employment (in addition to reliance on patrones for agricultural credit). One important gain of the peasantry was their freedom to migrate--at least now they could work where the highest wages were paid. But the right to be a migratory worker is certainly less than political liberation. That the ejiditarios remain in a dependent economic and political situation is confirmed by Chevalier (1967):

The majority of ejidos possess only non-irrigated land on which essential food stuffs are cultivated, especially the traditional crop, maize. Above all, these ejidos do not have access to credit, and the result is greater dependence on money lenders. These may be capitalists from outside the ejido, or local shopkeepers or farmers....

...if all the legal restraints were removed, it seems quite certain that both in the richest irrigated areas, which are of interest to large-scale capital investment, and in the poorer regions, where usury thrives, land would often be taken over and the weakest peasants would be driven out. 41

40. cited in E. Simpson, Op cit, 113-114 and N. Whetten Op cit 126-127  
Calles never issued a denial of these remarks, though claiming that he had not spoken for publication. (E. Simpson, ff, 114)

41. Chevalier, Op cit 182

The legal provisions of the ejido prevent alienation of ejidal lands, but the economic position of the peasants remains marginal. Likewise the ejiditarios remained politically dependent on the landlord and merchant politicians, with the difference, now, that competing elites at the local level made the peasants votes and pistols a sought-after commodity.

This circumstance provided the peasants with a degree of choice not previously available, but the traditional patron-client (politician-peasant) relationship remained the basis for this type of interaction. The ejiditarios were not an organized political force capable of "fighting their own fight".

In the absence of cadres sent by the central government to eliminate the influence of traditional elites and mobilize the peasantry for effective political and economic action, the countryside continued to be dominated by "politicos", landlords, merchants, and middlemen.

After twenty years of struggle (1910-1930) what did the tenure pattern in the countryside look like? Only 7.5 per cent of all cultivated holdings larger than one hectare were ejido lands; in the same year 13.4 per cent of the arable land was in ejidos. In the same year 1.5 per cent of non-ejido holdings accounted for 83 per cent of non-ejido land area, while 1.3

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per cent of all non-ejidal area was in 78 per cent of the holdings.

Fourteen years after the 1917 Constitution the structure of land tenure was still characterized by a large number of small and over-populated holdings, with a large proportion of the Mexican countryside in the hands of a small number of proprietors. (It is true that from 1915-1930 land redistribution

42. C. Tello, Op cit. 19

was carried but principally in the central states which had a high population density and intense pressure on the land; this provided some political leverage for the government since the peasants' demands usually began and ended with a small plot of ground). The greatest difference in the countryside in 1930, when compared to 1910, was the growing number of heads of households who were no longer landless. This the ejido accomplished: it turned landless serfs into subsistence farmers.

By 1935 there existed 7041 ejidos with 896,000 ejiditarios, Total land involved amounted to 11.7 million hectares, of which 1.8 million were arable (tierra de labor) and 160,000 hectares were irrigated.<sup>44</sup>

The vast majority of the ejiditarios were political and economic marginals.<sup>45</sup> The Revolution had given the peasants subsistence plots, but not an integral revolution in opportunities. But then Lazaro Cardenas came to the presidency.

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43. If we estimate, conservatively, that a nuclear family would have five members, we would guess that 4,500,000 persons depended on ejido plots. Put as Chevalier notes: "...on the ejidos live not only the ejiditarios entitled to be beneficiaries of the plot, but also a large number of persons more or less associated with them...grown children, relatives etc. who live in ejidal communities between their seasonal or occasional employment as braceros in the United States, daily paid labourers etc."(Chevalier, Op cit, 176)

44. C. Tello, Op cit, 22-23

45. By this is meant that the peasants were not incorporated into an elite directed mass movement, nor did they act even at the "administrative" level in the policies and programs of the government. Further, they lacked any institutional access to effectively make their demands or desires known to the central regime. Economically, the ejidos were only marginally, if at all, tied to the market economy. Corn, the principal subsistence plot was grown on over 70% of the ejidos

Expansion of the Program: Cardenas and after. Between 1935-1940 the Cardenas administration brought about a greater change in the Mexican countryside--but a change that left things, from the perspective of distribution of political power in the countryside, much the same. The basic issue of the permanency of the ejido was resolved in favor of the ejido. In these years 17.6 million hectares were distributed to 772,000 ejiditarios. In addition the following institutional changes were extended to the countryside: (1) The National Ejidal Credit Bank was created (1936) to deal exclusively with problems of credit on the ejidos; (2) the National Confederation of Peasants was created(1935)<sup>46</sup> and in 1938 incorporated into the structure of the Government party. This was a weak, but concrete. effort to integrate the ejido and the peasantry into national political life; (3) in 1936, for the first time, irrigated hacienda land was transformed into "collective ejidos"<sup>47</sup>; (4) in 1937 all peones in haciendas were given authority to freely request permission to form ejidos.

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46. Confedexacion Nacional de Campesinos (CNC),

47. This does not mean, however, that the landowners were driven from the countryside. Senior, in his case study of the Laguna area, points out that a minimum of 150 hectares of private property was to be respected as inalienable; the location of this land could be chosen by the owner. If a proprietor were left with land beyond that legally requested under the agrarian reform law by the peasants, and beyond his 150 hectares, he might divide the land into areas of not more than 150 hectares and sell these areas with the security that they would also be inalienable. "The Cardenas program broke with previous theory, but it did not escape the effect of the habits developed among the personnel who were to carry out the redistribution of land in the region; neither could it escape the limitations of the legal code based on the idea that the ejido should be purely a supplement to the hacienda." (p. 91)

48. Chevalier, Op cit, 240.

Cardenas was the first revolutionary president to come from central Mexico, to know from experience (his youth was spent in a "typical" central Mexican village) the conditions under which the villagers labored. Cardenas was apparently convinced that the ejido should become a fundamental part of the national economy. In no year of Cardenas' six-year term did the land distributed fall below 1,700,000 hectares; "in 1937 it reached a total of over 5,000,000 hectares."<sup>49</sup> For the first time commercial agricultural enterprises were subject to agrarian reform; among others, the cotton-producing area of La Laguna (447,516 hectares in Durango and Coahuila); the sugar-producing legions of Los Mochis (Sinaloa) and El Mante (Tamaulipas); the wheat and rice areas of the Yaqui valley (Sonora); the coffee plantations in the Sononusco (southern Chiapas); the cotton and wheat region of the Mexicali valley (Baja California Norte); the ficenequen region of Yucatan; and the rice, cattle, and lime plantations of Lombardia and Kueva Italia in Michoacan.

But despite Cardenas' commitment to the ejido, and his more general nationalistic appeal (manifested in expropriation of American oil interests), his administration did not eliminate the rights of private owners to retain relatively large parcels (in the Laguna region, 150 hectares chosen by the landowner) of land, nor to compensation for the lands which were expropriated. Having finally eliminated Calles as a threat to his dominance (1934-1936) by a series of political maneuvers, including raising the pay of Mexican soldiers (not officers) and organizing cadres within the labor movement to support the regime, Cardenas was unwilling to extend the collectivistic

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49. N. Whetten, *Op cit*, 127

50. *ibid.* 128,



justification of the ejidal experiments to socialization of the entire rural sector. In fact, in 1937 Cardenas authorized legislation which provided guarantees of "inaffectability" to cattle ranches (up to 50,000 hectares) in the arid northern states. Within the revolutionary coalition Cardenas was to the "left" of the spectrum, but neither his ideological orientation nor the policies his government carried out reversed the evolution of Mexican agriculture into a dual economy. In fact, the Cardenas program accelerated this process. He is still remembered fondly by the Mexican peasantry for the small plots his government distributed. But the central importance of his presidency, in retrospect, was his desire to remain within the revolutionary coalition, to accept the limited-pluralist framework that Mexican Government party politics implied. This strategy precluded a full scale mobilization of the countryside and elimination of the political power wielded by the land-owning class--because this class was, to some extent, also represented within the revolutionary coalition.

The agricultural census of 1940 demonstrates the significant factor the ejidos had come to represent in the Mexican countryside due substantially to Cardenas' intensification of the ejidal programs: In 1940 the ejiditarios represented 56.7 per cent of all rural landholders; they possessed 47.4 per cent of all crop land, 56.2 per cent of all irrigated lands,, and 18.3 per cent of all pasture land; they occupied 22 per cent of all lands appearing in the census of 1940.

In the same census, however, appeared the following data: Of the 77.5 per cent of the land that pertained to the private sector (total in private sector= 99,826,400) 1.1 per cent of the area belonged to 76.2 per cent of holders (in plots of from 1-5 hectares) while .8 per cent of holders owned 79.5 per cent of the land area (in plots of 1000 hectares or larger).

Private minifundia (1-5 hectares) had increased along with the growth of the ejidos.<sup>51</sup> Thus, by 1940 the "fruit" of the Revolution in the countryside was evident:

One begins to see the unbalanced development of agriculture in the country; on the one hand, minifundia, indifferent to technological progress and determined by climatological factors, with a high pressure of population on the land; on the other, [an agriculture] that responds to economic incentives such as prices, investment etc. and in this way improves its productivity and takes advantage of the opportunities the market offers. 52

Despite Cardenas' good intentions the ejido was only a limited political and social success, relieving temporary pressures for land ownership.

The National Ejido Bank quickly became a relatively conservative institution.

In 1945 Whetten found that,

The Ejido Bank is almost the only source of credit through which the ejiditarios are able to secure credit, ...Yet, in 1945 the Bank was working with only about 14 per cent of the ejiditarios of the Republic, while most of the other 86 per cent were substantially without credit. 53 \*

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51. It must be remembered that the size of holdings in Mexico is not generally a measure of arable land. Regional differences are great and holdings in the central zone tend to be smaller (both ejido and private) than those in the arid northern zones, where 50-100 hectares may be starvation holdings. Likewise, the minifundia often leave part of the arable land fallow since crop rotation of a systematic and "scientific" nature had not (and has not to this day) been introduced into many of the peasant areas.

52. C. Tello, Op cit, 34

53. N. Whetten, Op cit, 195.

\* Oscar Lewis, writing in 1960, quoted the director of research for the Ejido Bank as follows:

We lend to about one-third of all ejiditarios, those that have the richest and best lands. We prefer risks that have fertile soil and preferably irrigation. We do not have enough money for loans to subsistence farmers most of whom have the poorest land. ('Mexico Since Cardenas', 1960, 319).

Cardenas, the hero of the Mexican agrarianists, carried the ejido program, in its distributive aspects, about as quickly as possible in a six year period. As far as can be seen, however, the results were those forecast by Calles: expansion of a subsistence sector whose population remained less educated, less well-attended by public services, and less productive than other sectors of the rural population.

After Cardenas the agrarian phase of the Mexican Revolution was supposedly over.<sup>54</sup> The great accomplishment of the Revolution in the countryside? Freeing the serfs and making them marginal subsistence farmers? Or the fact that Mexican commercial agriculture has expanded dramatically, especially in the sparsely populated northern states where government investment in irrigation has paid large dividends? From 1947-1958, sixty per cent of all government investment in irrigation went into three northern states (**Baja California Norte, Sonora, and Tamaulipas**). From **1940-1955** the number of tractors in the northern states increased from 4620 to 55,000.<sup>55</sup> Growth in output has been concentrated in industrial crops, including cotton, sugar, coffee, and livestock--destined for American markets. Pacifying the peasants with land, the government gained almost fifty years breathing room in which great attention was devoted to private enterprise and commercial agriculture. The social consequences of the eventual and inevitable renewed pressure on the land in the peasant sector was ignored.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, in 1958 the Mexican president, Adolfo Lopez Mateos, announced a program of "reforma agraria integral"(integral land reform). This program,

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54. Oscar Lewis. "Mexico Since Cardenas", 1960, 319.

55. A.G. Frank, Op cit, 79

56. The seriousness of the problem was in some ways alleviated by the bracero program which allowed large numbers of rural laborers to work the migrant circuit in the U.S. As an illustration in a small village in Michoacan that I visited in 1965 perhaps a fifth to a third of the males had worked in the United States--either as braceras or "wetbacks".

according to Manzanilla Schaeffer,

recognized that simple distribution of the land did not exhaust Mexican agrarian reform, but only signified the beginning of a state activity that continued with a channeling of economic elements, goods and services in order to facilitate the incorporation of the peasant into the general productivity of the country. 57

That is, after 48 years the Mexican government had decided that agrarian revolution was more than a distribution of land. Meanwhile, writing in 1965, Pablo Gonzalez Casanova claims that perhaps 50 per cent of Mexico's population is politically and socially "marginal" and that the "rural population and especially the working class in the countryside is the poorest of the economically active population." 58

That the distribution of political power in the countryside remains in the hands of private landowners, merchants, and their organized interest groups (represented in the PRI structure in the Popular Sector--not the Farmers Sector which includes the ejiditarios--is confirmed by Robert Scott's observations which I have cited at length:

According to the agricultural census of 1956 Mexico's 18,564 ejidos were divided among 2,332,914 families, making the ejiditarios the single largest interest group in the country. Through the National Farmers Federation (the CNC) all ejiditarios are nominal members of the Farmers sector of the official party, even though they may also own a few hectares of private property....

Farmers who own only freehold land are less numerous and do not belong to the CNC. Instead they belong to one of two numerically small but politically effective functional interest associations, the National Federation of Small Farm Proprietors (Confederacion Nacional de la Pequena Propriedad Agricola) and the National Harvesters Association (Asociacion Nacional de Coscheros) (emphasis added)

57. Manzanilla Schaeffer, Reforma Agraria Mexicana, 1966, 151-152

58. La Democracia en Mexico, 1965, 118.

integrated into the popular sector of the official party on an individual member basis

...~~Amo~~... Among the several types of landholders there are vast differences in "wealth, culture and political awareness. The vast majority of ejiditarios are poor, isolated, and easily manipulated by their farm leaders in the CNC. So are many of the small farmers who own their own land... Despite efforts to integrate many of these small landholders into the national economy.. the program is neither so systematic nor so successful as to offer hope for immediate inclusion of most of these people in effective national life. 59 \*

Scott finds, on the other hand, that,

There is ...a smaller but influential group of individual landholders who are both more well-to-do and more politically effective than average. ...The persons who operate these holdings are well aware of national politics and economy, else they would not be in a position to control so disproportionate a share of Mexico's relatively small total of arable land, 60

.. We find in rural Mexico an almost classical example of the ineffective position in the political process of large numbers of unaware, unorganized, and unintegrated people in competition with orach smaller hut politically acute and organized groups. 61

The political process that Scott here refers to is not all political processes, but rather the kind of political process that puts a premium on bargaining, mutual adjustments and the recongition of the legitimacy of pluralism. As long as the landlords are Incorporated Into the revolutionary coalition, or co-opt the programs of the government In the countryside, there is no denying that the peasantry remain at a disadvantage. The Mexican case illustrates that without external supports against *the* landlord class and merchants the peasantry remain politically and economically subservient.

59. Robert Scott, Mexican Government in Transition, 1964, 68-59

\* In 1937 E. Simpson had noted "...the very concept of the nation., even in villages sometimes quite close to the capital is likely to be vague and hazy when it is not entirely outside the ken of the Mexican folk."(244)

60. *ibid*, 69-70

61. *ibid*, 70-71

Likewise, the ejiditarios are, for the most part, no longer "unaware" or "unorganized"--though their political effectiveness, measured by their ability to secure governmental commitments of resources to the ejidal sector, has been rather minimal, if Scott means by "unintegrated" that the CNG provides less effective political participation and representation than is the case for other interest groups, there can be no argument. But if he means that the mass of peasantry remain "parochials" he is in error. The important point, however, is that the peasant sector cannot compete with landlords and merchants, either economically or politically, without external support--most probably from the central government. This kind of support has been lacking from the outset of the Mexican Revolution; it is no surprise that the peasant sector remains dependent on traditional political elites in the countryside. The Mexican case is a "classic" in the sense that it illustrates the difficulty of carrying out a revolutionary redistribution of power in the countryside if (1) traditional political and social elites remain relatively intact and (2) the peasantry is not provided substantial external (governmental) assistance in organizing for production, marketing and political representation. In the absence of governmental commitment to deal integrally with the rural sector, eliminating *the* bases of power of the traditional elite, land reform may improve the peasantry's position in the short-run--but "it remains politically and economically dependent, Likewise, the Mexican case illustrates the tendency of a limited-pluralist low-level mobilization system to re-confirm traditional patterns of political and economic power in the countryside insofar as governmental elites are willing to abstain from direct penetration of the countryside by governmental agencies.

The Cuban Revolution, in all these respects, contrasts markedly with the Mexican experience.

### THE CURAO CASE

The Cuban Revolution was the first "socialist" revolution to be carried out in a nation whose pre-revolutionary economy was organized as a capitalist system of production. Even more important, the Cuban countryside was thoroughly penetrated by commercial agriculture, and the vast majority of the rural population were wage laborers. Unlike the Mexican peasantry, the Cuban rural labor force had a long pre-revolutionary exposure to urban culture, mass media, and national politics. For the most part, the Cuban rural population desired less a small plot of ground on which to subsist than full-time employment, higher wages and better education. The generally understood connotation of "land reform" (distribution of land to "those who work it") had great appeal to only a small segment of the Cuban peasantry; the rural proletariat identified less with the insecurity of the small proprietor than with the living standards of the urban work force.

Because the pre-revolutionary Cuban countryside is so unique in the history of agrarian revolutions, it is essential to describe in some detail pre-Castro rural Cuba.

Cuban agriculture since the mid-nineteenth century was commercial agriculture. For most of the last 130 years Cuba has been the world's leading sugar producer. The historically dominant role of sugar (and the social consequences of the slave economy) made Cuban society and particularly the rural sector very different from the neo-feudal hacienda-dominated social and economic systems found in much of Latin America. In Cuba, landlords quite early turned over their estates to sugar plantations; by 1860 Cuba, producing thirty

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1. From 1880-1914 Germany surpassed Cuba in sugar production.
  2. Slavery was abolished in Cuba in 1880.

percent of the world's sugar, had 1365 sugar mills (ingenics)--mostly in the western end of the island, and some (perhaps 30) already owned by North Americans.<sup>3</sup> Gradually old planters sold out to the mills or ceased to grind their own cane, depending on rail transport to carry their cane to be processed<sup>4</sup> in new million-dollar mills. By 1900 the number of mills had been substantially reduced (to 160-200) and "administration cane" became prevalent, although the centrales<sup>5</sup> continued to depend on colonos for the great bulk of the cane they processed. By 1925-28 the centrales<sup>6</sup> owned about twenty percent<sup>7</sup> of the total area of Cuba; the numerous small proprietors were largely, though not entirely, eliminated.

In addition to sugar, and the complementary extensive livestock enterprises, other commercial crops early penetrated the Cuban countryside, including tobacco, wheat, and coffee. While each of these crops implied distinct tenure and exploitation patterns--and distinct forms of social organization--they had one thing in common: their commercialization was linked to international markets. The Cuban countryside, unlike much of rural Latin America, was not a neo-feudal society; rather, it was geared to large-scale capitalistic production of export crops, and employed large quantities of seasonal (and lesser quantities of permanent) wage labor. The secular decline in the number of Cuban small-holders, a trend which had resulted from the intensification of competitive pressure on peasant operators from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, left as a consequence a large unionized rural proletariat, in addition to the non-organized rural laborers. By 1946, 70 percent of the population actively engaged in Cuban agriculture could be classified as wage laborers.

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3. Hugh Thomas, "Middle Class Politics and the Cuban Revolution" in C. Veliz, ed., The Politics of Conformity in Latin America, p. 250-251.
  4. Ibid, p. 251.
  5. Large sugar operations.
  6. Independent producers or tenants on administration land,
  7. Lowry Nelson, Rural Cuba, 1950, p. 95.



The following table illustrates the pattern of occupational stratification in rural Cuba in 1952:

AGRICULTURAL LABOR FORCE IN CUBA, 1952

	<u>Thousands of Persons</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Farm Laborers	(596.8)	(72.9)
Paid workers	520.9	63.6
Unpaid family workers	66.7	8.1
Administrators and foremen	9.2	1.1
Ranchers and farmers	<u>221.9</u>	<u>27.1</u>
Agricultural labor force	818.7	100.0

(Cited in Bianchi, p. 80)

In 1946 400,000 temporary paid workers constituted about one-half of the gainfully employed agricultural population; 52 percent of these persons worked no more than four months in the year and only 6 percent had been employed for

8

nine months or more. The seasonal fluctuations associated with the sugar and coffee harvests meant that at least one-fifth of all workers were normally unemployed from August to October, although the tiempo muerto (dead season) extended from May to October, when the tobacco harvest picked up some of the slack. Bianchi cites the following data as indicative of seasonal unemployment trends:

CUBA, MAY 1956 - APRIL, 1957

<u>Periods</u>	<u>Thousands of Unemployed</u>	<u>Percent of Labor Force</u>
May - June	435	19.7
August - October	457	20.7
November - January	353	10.6
February - April	200	9.0
Average	361	16.4

(Cited in Bianchi, p. 80)

The uniqueness of the Cuban rural sector was compounded by two basic institutional features of the agricultural economy: 1) the sugar interests

8. A. Bianchi, p. 81-82, in D. Seers, ed., 1964.

held large quantities of land in reserve against a boom in sugar prices. Between 1953-56, however, the maximum absolute variation of area planted in cane reached about one-fourth of the total (1,000,000 hectares, approximately) the centrales held in reserve; at the same time, when sugar prices declined<sup>9</sup> the centrales simply left cane unharvested. As Bianchi notes:

For the centrales, concerned almost exclusively with the production of sugar, this system was extremely flexible and almost costless. For the national economy, however, it represented a costly under-utilization of the best farm land of the island. The system meant in fact that during the period 1953-58 not less than 15 percent of the total area under crops was, on the average, left unharvested in the cane fields.<sup>10</sup> (emphasis added)

2) Trade treaties with the United States, and especially the Reciprocal Trade Agreement of 1934 (associated with concessions on Cuban sugar, and which remained in force, with some modifications, until the Revolution) allowed U. S. originated products relatively easy access to Cuban markets. While these arrangements particularly retarded development of Cuban manufactures, the importation of foodstuffs was also common. From 1955-53 annual average imports that domestic agricultural production might have replaced (if we

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include cotton) was about \$100,000,000. At the same time that sugar interests retained vast reserves and extensive cattle operations under-utilized some of Cuba's most productive land, the Cuban agricultural sector failed to provide adequate food supply to feed the nation's population. Rice, beans, lard, pork, onions, dairy products, eggs, canned fruit, etc. were regularly imported from the United States. In addition, unemployment and underemployment affected significant portions of the rural population. There was no "shortage" of land in Cuba; institutional features of the rural economy were principally responsible for rural unemployment and agricultural underproduction. These institutional

9. Ibid., p. 86.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 400.

obstructions to social and economic reform were susceptible to political manipulation--as Castro was to demonstrate !

There is only one source for comprehensive aggregate data which provides an overview of the Cuban countryside (prior to 1959) in terms of settlement patterns, land tenure, and stratification--the National Agricultural Census of 1946. This was the first comprehensive census of agriculture in Cuban history. Both the most reliable pre-revolutionary study of rural Cuba<sup>12</sup> and the first revolutionary land reform<sup>13</sup> rely on the 1946 data. Since the Revolution, Cuban journals and periodicals commonly use the 1946 data as indicative of the situation in the Cuban countryside in 1959. Despite the obvious disadvantages of using data at least thirteen years out of date, we are forced to rely on the 1946 census for treatment of pre-Castro rural Cuba, along with Nelson's Rural Cuba. Supplementary data, where available, is<sup>14</sup> presented to bring the 1946 figures "up to date" (closer to 1959).

Nelson identified three principal settlement patterns in rural Cuba: 1)dispersed farmsteads, 2) farm villages (rural homes built in clusters, not on separate farms, 3) "line villages" (farm homes built on farms which are long and narrow in shape, so that all the houses face a highway, river, or other means of transportation, and are reasonably close together without being separated from the fields. Farm laborers on the sugar colonias and tobacco vegas lived in clusters called bateyes. According to Nelson, these were the closest thing to farm villages in rural Cuba, although occupied by laborers, not farm operators. Independent peasants, tenants, sharecroppers, etc. generally lived on the plots they cultivated; unlike Mexico, pre-revolution

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12. Nelson, op cit.

13. For an English translation of this law see: T. Lynn Smith, ed., Agrarian Reform in Latin America, New York, 1965, p. 145-152.

14. In 1959, Cuba had a total population of about 6,500,000, 43 percent of which lived in the countryside. Discounting all centers of population over 500 persons, strictly "rural" population was estimated at 2,500,000 persons. (Panorama Economico Latinoamericano (PEL) Ano 7, No.207,1966,16)

Cuba was not a "nation of villages," though trade centers of various sizes did exist. Nelson reports the following distribution of Cuban population according to types of center and size:

NUMBER AND POPULATION OF CUBAN TRADE CENTERS OF VARIOUS TYPES ACCORDING TO SIZE, 1943 (SOURCE: CENSUS OF 1943)<sup>15</sup>

	<u>Number of Centers</u>		<u>Population of Centers</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	863	100.0	2,568,142	100.0
Caserios (under 250)	234	27.1	36,848	1.4
Poblados (250-749)	300	34.8	135,928	5.3
Pueblos (750-2499)				
Pequeno (750-1499)	132	15.3	135,267	5.3
Grande (1500-2499)	60	7.0	116,386	5.6
Villas (2500-4999)	81	9.4	290,583	11.3
Ciudades				
Pequena (5000-9999)	22	2.5	157,672	6.1
Median <sup>o</sup> (10,000-24,999)	20	2.3	317,970	12.4
Grande (25,000 or more)	14	1.6	1,376,988	53.6

If we assume that the total population of Cuba in 1943 was 4,778,583, as  
16 \*

reported in the 1943 census we see that almost 50 percent of the Cuban population lived in clusters of less than 250 persons, or on isolated farmsteads. Nelson admits that various "hamlets" (clusters of five or ten structures, with perhaps a small country store) are not listed in the census, but this does not change the basic circumstance that the Cuban countryside could not adequately be studied from the perspective of intra-village stratification or landlord-village relations. The dominance of plantation agriculture and extensive cattle ranching, supplemented by squatters, tenants, sub-renters, and sharecroppers producing sugar, coffee, tobacco, and truck crops on dispersed farmsteads, gave the Cuban rural sector a unique character, more similar, perhaps, to U. S. and Canadian settlement patterns than to those in much of Latin America.

15. Cited in Nelson, op cit., p. 73.

16. Ibid., p. 28.

With respect to tenure and size of holdings, the last pre-Revolutionary survey shows the following patterns:

Size Groups (hectares)	Number of Farms	% of total farms	Area (hectares)	% of total area
1-4.9	32,195	20.13	86,033.2	.95
5-9.9	30,305	18.94	210,705.7	2.32
10-24.9	48,778	30.49	725,070.7	7.99
25-49.9	23,901	14.95	789,726.0	8.70
50-99.9	12,010	7.51	818,319.0	9.02
100-499.9	10,433	6.52	2,193,599.0	24.17
500-999.9	1,442	.90	992,530.7	10.93
1000-4999.9	780	.49	1,443,500.0	15.90
5000-	114	.07	1,817,602.0	20.02
	<u>159,958</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>9,077,086.5</u>	<u>100.0</u>

(Source: Agricultural Census, 1946)  
cited in PEL, op. cit, No. 207, 14

Less than 8 per cent of all holdings accounted for 70 per cent of the farmland, one-half of one per cent controlling 36.1 per cent of the total farm acreage. More than 80 per cent of holdings comprised less than one-fifth of the agricultural land, over one-third of the farms being smaller than two hectares and more than 70 per cent less than twenty-five hectares.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, as the following table illustrates, in 1946 only 30.5 per cent of all holdings and 32.4 per cent of the land in farms was directly managed by farm owners. Including all types of renters, these exceeded owners both in number of farms and area controlled. Sharecroppers farmed about 20 per cent of the production units.

Type of Operator	Farms (number)	% of total	(1000 hectares) Total Area	% of total
Owner	48,792	30.5	2958.7	32.4
Administrator	9,342	5.8	2320.4	25.6
Renter	48,048	28.8	2713.9	30.6
Sub-renter	6,987	4.4	215.2	2.4
Sharecropper	33,064	20.7	552.1	6.1
Squatter	13,718	8.6	244.6	2.7
Other	2,007	1.2	72.1	0.8
	<u>159,958</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>9077.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

(Source: Agr. Census, 1946)  
cited in Bianchi, Op cit, 79

<sup>17</sup> Bianchi, Op cit, 74.

These aggregate indicators of concentration and tenure patterns reflected the situation in the dominant branches of Cuban agriculture: sugar and livestock. Again, the important implications of these data include the fact that a very few owners controlled over 70 per cent of the agricultural land, that these farms were capitalist production units, and that even those owners who did not directly manage their farms used the land as an economic resource—employing administrators to run the farms as business enterprises or renting the land to others. The countryside was almost entirely monetized.

In May of 1959 the 28 largest sugar cane producers owned over 1,400,000 hectares and rented over 600,000, thus controlling more than 20 per cent  
18  
of the land in farms. In the livestock sector the 40 largest firms owned 10 per cent of all land in farms; in 1952, .2 per cent of the approximately 90,000 holdings that were raising cattle owned 42.4 per cent of the national cattle stock.<sup>19</sup> In the rice sector, new techniques and mechanization introduced in the 1950's made rice production quite modern, but in 1958, 5 per cent of all rice producers controlled about 75 per cent of the area under rice cultivation and produced an even larger share of total output<sup>20\*</sup>

While rice production had come to be quite modern, the livestock and sugar sectors were technically backward; livestock runs were generally natural pastures and sugar productivity was, relative to other world producers, quite low as evidenced by FAO data reported in 1961.<sup>21</sup>

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18. *ibid*, 76

19. *ibid*.

20. *ibid*, 91

\* That these figures still understate the degree of concentration is reflected by the fact that in 1959, 2873 proprietors with 3602 farms owned an area of 6,252,163 hectares—almost 62% of the total agricultural area of the country. (Jacques Chonchol, "Análisis Crítico...", 1963, 75)

21. Metric tons of sugar cane/hectare :Hawaii, 205.53; Peru, 158.34; Taiwan, 70.34; Puerto Rico, 60.66; U.S., 52.65; Brazil, 40.58; Cuba, 39.17; Argentina, 33.65.

Strongly organised and government-protected rural labor unions made the introduction of mechanized planting, harvesting and processing quite difficult. But, in addition, the sugar companies refused to apply appropriate fertilizers or to undertake agricultural research to support and improve the sugar economy. As things stood, the cheapest factor of production for the centrales was land; increased acreage planted in times of price upswings seemed far more economical than efforts aimed at increased productivity per hectare planted in cane. Again, it should be noted that institutional features of the economy were responsible for many of the pre-Revolutionary problems in the agricultural sector--not scarcity of land.

In 1958 total agricultural production in Cuba (measured at the level of producers) was estimated at 731 million pesos,<sup>22</sup> distributed by product as follows:

<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Million Pesos</u>	<u>% of Agrarian Production</u>
Sugar cane	266.8	36.5
Rice	42.5	6.2
Coffee	32.3	4.4
Tobacco	45.2	6.2
Remaining agricultural production	104.0	14.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>493.8</b>	<b>67.5</b>
<u>Animal Products</u>		
Cattle	112.9	15.4
Pork	25.9	3.5
Poultry	13.9	1.9
Milk	72.0	9.8
Eggs	12.5	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>731.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: cited in Chonchol,78)

Sugar represented 54 per cent of the strictly agricultural production; it occupied 56 per cent of all cultivated land.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>.Chonchol, Op cit, 77

<sup>23</sup>.ibid.

From 1957-1958 sugar exports accounted for 77 per cent of the value of all Cuban exports, and in the preceding years this figure fluctuated between 70-80 per cent.<sup>24</sup>

The second most important sector--livestock-dairy--accounted in 1958 for 25.2 per cent of the total agrarian output. The 5.1 million head of cattle (1960 estimate) grazed on 4,562,800 hectares of pasture land. Thus, it is precisely in the two most important sectors of the rural economy that concentration of ownership was highest(along with the rice sector)--and therefore most susceptible to administrative expropriation with little physical change in the organization of production.

If the two traditional export crops(tobacco and coffee) and one product of more recent importance(rice) are added to sugar and cattle-dairy, the five products accounted for 80 per cent of the total value of production in the agrarian sector(1958). In 1958 some 60,000 hectares were dedicated to tobacco<sup>25</sup>; 96,000 persons were actively employed in tobacco production including cultivators (vegueros)--both small proprietors and sharecroppers--and wage labor.<sup>26</sup> Coffee was also generally produced on small proprietor or share-crop plots, 80 per cent of production being obtained in the easternmost province, Oriente, where even after the Revolution small proprietors continued to dominate as thousands of squatters were given title to the land they occupied. The coffee harvest, like that of tobacco, employed wage labor which came to the mountains from the valleys for the harvest (October-December). Many of these workers were also employed in the sugar harvest (January-April). It is estimated that some 130-140 thousand hectares was devoted to coffee in 1958.<sup>27</sup>

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24. *ibid.* 79

25. *ibid.*, 81

26. *ibid.*, 82

27. *ibid.*



In 1959 perhaps 20,000 farm units cultivated coffee, occupying "full-time" 50,000 persons and seasonally up to 150,000.<sup>28</sup>

The importance of rice in Cuba, relative to coffee and tobacco was a "new" phenomenon. In 1948-1949, production was 63,000 metric tons (unshelled, arroz cascara); 1957-1958 production had risen to 240,000 metric tons.

Despite this rapid increase in production, 1957-1958 importation of rice (unshelled equivalent) was 290,000 metric tons. Thus, domestic production<sup>29</sup> covered less than 50 per cent of internal consumption. Rice production was generally a large scale, specialized, capitalistic enterprise with a high level of mechanisation. The majority of tractors in pre-Revolution Cuba were owned by rice producers and fumigation was done with airplanes. Despite the existence of some 5000 rice producers in 1958, about 250 of these with more than 60 hectares each controlled 75 per cent of the total area cultivated in rice and accounted for a still larger proportion of total rice production.<sup>30</sup> As in the large-scale sugar and cattle enterprises, the capitalistic organization of the rice sector was to allow the Revolutionary government to create state farms with little change in production processes. In fact, the rice plantations were among the first units to be transformed into granjas del pueblo(state farms).

The remaining 20 per cent of the value of agrarian production(all crops and products besides for cattle-dairy, sugar cane, tobacco, coffee and rice) was accounted for by grains--wheat, com, etc.--yuca, sweet potatoes, malanga, ñame, platano macho, root crops(viandas) and truck crops, bananas, citrus fruit, avocado, and industrial crops such as peanuts and henequen.<sup>31</sup>

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28. Ibid, S3.

29. In 1958, a low consumption year in the 1948-1959 decade, per capita consumption was 48 kilograms(clean). This figure is lower than Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, Pakistan, China and India, but superior to all other American, African and European nations, (ibid)

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid, 84.

The majority of these products were cultivated on small scale with rudimentary technology by peasants, and in significant amount consumed by producers. After the Revolution, the peasant sector continued to dominate in production of coffee, tobacco, truck crops, root crops and tuberculars.

In summary, the following table illustrates the area and distribution of farms by crops in 1959-60:

ESTIMATE OF TOTAL AREA IN FARMS AND DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO USE, 1959-60		
	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Crops	2,374,668	23.6
Sugar cane (1,331,800; 56%)		
Other crops (1,042,868; 44%)		
Pastures	4,562,800	45.3
Woodlands (montes)	1,265,698	12.6
Marabu (a weed plague)	214,519	2.1
Other (indirectly productive or sterile)	1,650,405	16.4
	10,086,090	100.0

(Source: Proyecto de Plan Quinquenal, cited in Chonchol, op cit., p. 72.)

To repeat, the most important characteristics of the agrarian sector in terms of the post 1959 revolutionary program was the export-oriented mono-economy, its capitalist organization, and the high concentration of ownership—which allowed vast agricultural tracts to be expropriated by the revolutionary government and converted from corporate farms to state farms with little difficulty.

Social and Economic Position of the Agricultural Population. In 1956 the Agrupación Católica Universitaria carried out a survey intended to provide information about the standard of living of the rural population. The sample was said to be a representative sample of the farm population; 1000 interviews were carried out in the 126 municipios of the country. Some of the most pertinent findings are presented by Chonchol, and are summarized below in order to illustrate the poor conditions in which the rural population lived in

32. Chonchol, *ibid.*, p. 86-87, and Bianchi, *op cit.*, p. 95.

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pre-1959 Cuba:

Diet. Only 4 percent of those interviewed ate meat as a regular part of their diet; fish was mentioned by 1 percent; eggs by 2.12 percent and milk by 11.22 percent. Bread was consumed regularly by 3.36 percent of the sampled population; wheat flour by 7 percent. Vegetables were not mentioned in any interview.

The principal source of energy-giving elements was rice (24 percent of total diet), followed by beans (23 percent of total diet, and viandas (yuca, sweet potato, squash, platano) malanga. Thus, beans, rice and root crops were the essential ingredients of the diet of the Cuban rural population.

Health and Medical Services. Fourteen percent of those interviewed suffered from (or had in the past) tuberculosis; 13 percent from typhus; 36 percent had intestinal parasites. Only 8 percent received free government medical attention.

Education. Forty-three percent of those surveyed could neither read nor write; 44 percent had never attended school.

Housing. 60.35 percent of those surveyed lived in wood structures with dirt floors (bohios); 63.96 percent of the housing units had neither toilets nor latrines; 25.08 percent had outdoor latrines; 1.28 percent had indoor water closets; 88.50 percent of these surveyed obtained their water from wells; 5.42 percent from indoor plumbing. Only 7.26 percent of the units had electricity.

Income. 50.64 percent of the families interviewed had an annual yearly income of less than \$500 (1 peso equals 1 dollar); 42.15 percent from \$500-1000; 7.21 percent from \$1000-1200. Including consumption of home grown products, average income for a family of five was \$548.75 (\$91.25 per capita year). If

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33. The data that follows is cited in Chonchol, *ibid.*, p. 87.

these figures are indeed representative; it means that the agricultural population's per capita income (including consumption of home production) was about one-fourth the average per capita income in Cuba for 1956 which was calculated at \$368 pesos.

In sum, we can say that the rural-peasant population was the most neglected group of Cubans, less well attended by government services (education, health, housing, communication, transportation) and least favored by existing distribution of economic product than any other segment of the population.

Small Proprietors and Rural Proletariat. Unlike the pre-revolutionary Mexican countryside, the percentage of rural Cubans who desired to be peasant proprietors was relatively low. To satisfy the demands of these latter, the Castro government would only be required to deliver titles to thousands of squatters, sharecroppers and tenants. The vast majority of rural Cubans, however, were wage laborers, and the majority of these worked full or part-time in the sugar economy. This rural proletariat had a long history of political and economic organization; it knew the power of the central government and the owners of the centrales. The transition from wage earner in a capitalist enterprise to wage earner in a state enterprise would prove to be minimal.

The Communist Party of Cuba (Partido Socialista Popular), from 1931 onward, made efforts to organize all sugar workers (industrial and agricultural) into one large syndicate. <sup>35</sup> As suggested above, Nelson argued that by 1946 perhaps 70 percent of those actively engaged in agriculture could be called wage laborers. After the "revolution" of 1933, 36 sugar mills were occupied by striking workers (the strike itself had been a prominent factor in the government's overthrow);

34. It is evident that this sample is not a "cross-section" of all the rural population; 100.0 percent of all rural Cuban families did not earn less than \$1200. Since the study was not accessible, I cannot know the "universe" which the sample does represent, although it seems to be indicative for the conditions in which the rural proletariat and small proprietors found themselves
35. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, "La Revolucion Cubana y el Campesinado", Cuba Socialista, January 1966, Ano VI 53, p. 28.

the strikes were largely Communist-controlled. As Nelson points out, after  
1934 the National Confederation of Labor "has been under Communist control."<sup>36</sup>  
Even in 1933 the Communist unions proclaimed as their goal "the seizure of the  
mills, establishment of Soviets and the arming of the proletariat."<sup>37</sup>

These extremely radical aspects of the revolution were dissipated by  
stem action of the new government, but no post-Machado regime has failed  
to manifest interest in a concern for the working classes.<sup>38</sup>

In 1944 the Confederation of Labor "was given practical control of the Ministry  
of Labor. . . . There was continuous agitation for the expulsion of foreigners  
from Cuban economic life, and against foreign landholders and 'American  
Imperialism.'"<sup>39</sup> From 1940 onward the rural proletariat in Cuba constituted  
an organized/and "politically advanced" sector.<sup>40</sup>

As Rodriguez argues, while the rural proletariat did not "escape from  
misery and unemployment," appreciable gains were made in real income, especially  
when compared to other Latin American countries. At the same time, small  
proprietors suffered a decline in their economic condition--higher rents,  
evictions, and loss of properties they previously owned.<sup>41</sup>

Rodriguez cites the following circumstances to explain the relatively  
"advanced" political level in which the Cuban rural proletariat found itself.<sup>42</sup>

1) Cuba is a small country, in which geographical distances from city to  
countryside are minimal. In no part of the country (except the Sierra Maestxa,  
part of Escaabray, and a portion of Cienaga de Zapata) were there zones which  
maintained themselves isolated from the urban areas.

36. Nelson, op cit., p. 148.

37. Ibid., p. 149.

38. Ibid., p. 148.

39. Ibid., p. 149.

40. C. R. Rodriguez, op cit., vis: ". . .one could say, without fear of exaggeration, that no other social group in Latin America could be compared with it (the Cuban rural proletariat) with reference to these characteristics

41. Ibid., p. 29.

42. Ibid., p. 29.

Confirmation of Rodriguez's generalizations are found in the previously cited survey by the Agrupación Católica Universitaria (1956). When asked which factors and institutions could solve the agrarian problem, 74 percent of those interviewed mentioned "increasing employment opportunities," and 18.4 percent called for more and better education. In addition, 69 percent thought that the institution most capable of solving their problems was the government; 16.7 percent, their employers.<sup>45</sup>

The Cuban countryside demanded government policies quite different from the generally understood connotation of "land reform" (i.e. distribution of land to "those who work it"). Large estates exploited as capitalistic enterprises, agricultural wage workers little desirous of becoming small proprietors, permitted the direct transfer of vast extensions of land to the revolutionary government (after 1959) with little violence. Only in the intensively farmed tobacco, coffee, and peasant subsistence sector would resistance to state farms have been likely to develop. But, as pointed out below, it is precisely in these sectors that the Cuban revolutionary government has retained small proprietor agriculture, and, indeed, helped to strengthen it.

Pre-Castro Government Intervention in the Sugar Economy. A final point must be made before turning to the revolutionary program in the countryside carried out by the Castro government. The Cuban agricultural economy, and sugar in particular, had a relatively long history of government regulation and control. Even prior to the depression of the 1930's the large Cuban sugar producers reached agreement with the government on the desirability of regulating production in the sugar sector. Nelson argues that the "first step" in what he calls the "Era of Government Intervention" was taken in 1926 with the Verdeja Act (May 3, 1926).<sup>46</sup> This act called for a 10 percent reduction in the

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45. Bianchi, op cit., p. 97.

46. Nelson, op cit., p. 98.

estimated sugar crop for that year and provided that, for the 1927 crop, total production should be limited to 4 1/2 million tons and the grinding date delayed to January 1.<sup>47</sup> Each mill received a quota roughly proportional with what it expected to realize.

The Sugar Defense Act (October 4, 1927) provided for (1) a National Sugar Defense Commission to advise the president to prepare annual estimates of the amount of Cuban sugar required in foreign countries and recommend the degree and character of restrictions to be imposed. . . . (2) a sugar export company, to which all mill owners would belong, and which would control all sugar marketed outside the U. S. and Cuba and would administer a system of production<sup>48</sup> quotas.

In 1930 the Chadbourne Plan further sought to organize the sugar industry. Its essential features included;

(1) The segregation of 1 1/2 million tons of sugar to be turned over to a new sugar-export corporation and marketed outside of the United States and Cuba over a five-year period. (2) The segregated sugar was to be paid for at once by the issuance of up to \$42,000,000 in bonds. . . secured . . . by the unconditional guarantee of the government. (3) A third feature was the authorization of the president of Cuba to fix the quantity of any Cuban crop provided there were international agreements between producers; to fix the quantity during five years at the request of 65 percent of the mill owners who produced 65 percent of the preceding crop; and to fix a quota for the United States irrespective of such prerequisites. Finally, until December 31, 1935, no sugar could be exported from Cuba without a permit from the export corporation . . .<sup>49</sup>

Nelson notes that these legislative and executive decrees greatly influenced land use in rural Cuba; a protective tariff diverted resources to the production of dairy products, meat, eggs, and poultry, and stimulated moribund coffee<sup>50</sup> production.

In 1933, after a short period of guerilla warfare, the Cuban government changed hands; in 1937 the Law of Sugar Coordination (Ley de Coordinación

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47. Ibid., p. 99.

48. Ibid,

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., p. 99.

Azucarera) "set forth in minute detail"--

- (1) the rights and obligations of the various producers and laborers of the sugar mills;
- (2) the distribution of production quotas (which regularly favored the colonos over "administration cane"--thus, saving the small peasants and renters producing sugar from extinction;
- (3) prices to be paid for grinding;
- (4) the amount of rental to be paid for the use of the land;
- (5) the images to be paid for labor;
- (6) procedures for administration and arbitration.

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The new Constitution of 1940 went so far as to prohibit large land holdings and provide that "The acquisition and possession of land by foreign persons and companies shall be restrictively limited by law, which shall provide

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measures tending to restore the land to Cubans." While never enforced, these provisions were often cited by Fidel Castro in his messages from the Sierra Maestra; it is, in any case, clear that "agrarian reform" and anti-imperialistic feelings precede Castro by many years (Castro cites Marti, a leader in the 1858 independence movement) and that government regulation and control of the rural economy is not a revolutionary invention, although the particular institutional fora the revolutionary government has provided is indeed innovative. Significantly, however, government manipulation of land use through tariffs and internal incentives, as well as direct controls (if not operation) of the sugar economy, including setting wages for the mill workers and the rural proletariat, precede Castro by many years.

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51. Ibid., 100-101.

52. Ibid., 103.

53. Fagen tells us that in 1922 one Havana newspaper printed the following banner headline: "Hatred of North Americans Will be the Religion of Cubans," Transaction, April 1969, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 15; Richard R. Fagen, "Revolution-For Internal Consumption Only", p. 10-15.



The Pre-Castro Cuban Countryside in Perspective. A good amount of time and space has been spent describing the pre-revolutionary situation in rural Cuba because, as Zeitlin, among others, has argued:

The Cuban revolutionaries--whatever their extraordinary abilities, especially Fidel's--came to power in a society whose pre-revolutionary social structure endowed them with vast advantages compared to the leaders of other major social revolutions in this century.

. . . Fidel led a socialist revolution without knowing it and the communists were virtually dragged into socialism by the fidelistas because history made this possible.<sup>55</sup>

Zeitlin argues that "Cuba's is the first socialist revolution to take place in a capitalist country--a country in which the owning class was capitalist and

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the direct producers were wage workers." While Zeitlin's argument is essentially accurate, it should be remembered that the rebel army relied on small proprietors for supplies, informations and support in the guerilla campaign--whether these peasants were owners, renters, tenants, or squatters. This is not a refutation of Zeitlin's thesis--only a reminder that there is some validity in the arguments of those who have emphasized (and perhaps romanticized) the importance of peasants in the Castro movement. Despite this fact, however, it does seem that Zeitlin is correct; the Cuban revolution derives its post-Castro development substantially from the pre-revolutionary economic and technological development of the Cuban countryside, and the complementary political and organizational forms which accompanied this development. This line of argument is not meant to denigrate the role of Fidel Castro as a charismatic leader, or to imply that anything about the revolution was "inevitable nor to deny the shifting ideological commitments of the revolutionary government.

54. Maurice Zeitlin, "Cuba- -Revolution Without a Blue Print," Trans-Action, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 58-42, 61.

55. Ibid., p. 61.

56. Ibid., p. 38.

The point is that the changes which occurred in the Cuban countryside were facilitated by the existing economic and social structure in the rural sector.

Thus, as Zeitlin has pointed out: 1) there were no significant feudal or seignorial elements; no anti-feudal revolution was necessary. <sup>57</sup> Likewise, the pressure for land distribution was limited, and generally accomplished by legal rather than physical measures. (This, in marked contrast to the Mexican Revolution which was essentially anti-feudal.) 2) The working class in Cuba was the largest, most cohesive and most politically conscious class in the country—with a history of socialist-communist influence. <sup>58</sup> (This, in marked contrast to the unorganized condition of the peasant-serfs in pre-revolutionary Mexico.) 3) Even the peasants (COLONOS in the sugar sector, vegueros, cafeteros, or "subsistence" farmers) were integrated into the market economy at least through one or two of the many crops produced on their "subsistence" plots. <sup>59</sup> In addition, they were dependent on the large sugar centrales (or in the case of the peasants, the middlemen, landlords, or merchants) for housing, credit, milling, and marketing. <sup>60</sup> (In Mexico, even with the land reform most of the ejiditarios were subsistence farmers untied to the market. They were, however, dependent on middlemen for credit—where available at all—and marketing.) 4) The Ruling class was absentee-landlord, often foreign; <sup>61</sup> they had no social base in the countryside. As Zeitlin notes:

What strengthened the hand of the ruling class in other social revolutions was a mass social base, largely in the countryside, which they could mobilise as allies to defend their own interests.<sup>62</sup> A counterrevolutionary movement in these countries was possible because the rulers still had

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57. Ibid., p. 38.

58. Ibid.

59. **Ibid.**, p. 39.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Compare with Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, especially the sections on Japan and China.

legitimacy in and social control of the rural population. . . . Of course, Cuban capitalism was absentee-controlled and quasi-colonial. This meant that not only did the ruling strata not have roots in the countryside but that, indeed, they had no independent base of economic power in the country as a whole . . . they also lacked social legitimacy.<sup>63</sup>

5) Production and distribution tended to be controlled by a few firms and producers' association, and output, wages, prices, and earnings were determined within the framework of such market controls. <sup>64</sup> The rural economy was already

"centrally controlled" for most practical purposes. In Zeitlin's words,

The sugar-central, wage labor agrarian complex . . . made it possible to create relatively rapidly and easily a socialist agrarian sector--virtually by shifting the locus of control . . . .<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to Mexico, where revolutionary leaders faced a long campaign of "pacification" and internecine strife, (including resistance on the part of landlords--and the church-- with the consequent clerical-anticlerical struggle) the Cuban revolutionaries <sup>66</sup> could, in the initial stages, affect

63. Zeitlin, op cit., p. 39-40.

64. Ibid., p. 41.

65. Ibid., p. 42.

6.6. Only changes in the countryside are treated in this essay, while recognizing that the Cuban Revolution has been an "integral" revolution, progressively more radical--which, in 1968, "confiscated 55,636 small, private businesses" in order to eliminate a new bourgeois element. The party newspaper argued that "It is intolerable that a worker should become a potential bourgeois, a self-centered money-grabber and exploiter of his countrymen." (Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "The Revolutionary Offensive," Trans-Action, April 1969, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 22.)

Despite the socialization of all other sectors of the economy, agriculture retains a significant private sector, even according to Mesa-Lago's data. Thus:

THE COLLECTIVIZATION PROCESS IN CUBA (%)

	<u>1962</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1968</u>
Agriculture	37	70*	70
Industry	85	95	100
Construction	80	98	100
Transportation	92	95	100
Retail Trade	52	75	100
Wholesale and Foreign Trade	100	100**	100
Banking	100	100	100
Education	100	100	100

less than 4000 farm units and gain control over 50 percent of all agricultural property. They could do this with, almost complete support from the rest of the population and faced little danger of counterrevolutionary activity until the interests of American capitalists merged with those of the small Cuban landlord class, especially after the second agrarian reform. But in the initial agrarian reform, and particularly with regard to re-asserting Cuban sovereignty in the conflict with the United States, Castro represented the basic underlying "consensus" about what "had to be done" by any popular government in Cuba. Thus, in addition to the unique economic and social structure of the Cuban countryside, Castro was able to employ traditional Cuban anti-yanquism and to make a nationalist revolution, while making a social revolution--a circumstance which contributed considerably to his success.

The First Agrarian Reform. In October of 1958, three months before the collapse of the Batista government, the leaders of the revolutionary movement prepared a provisional law of agrarian reform. Six years earlier, when on trial for leading the assault on the Moncada barracks, Castro had declared that a revolutionary government would enforce the provisions of the Constitution of 1940 which proscribed latifundia and restricted ownership by foreign land-owners. Land reform was, from the outset, a basic appeal of the Castro program both for the peasants and for the middle-class nationalists.

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66. (con't.)

\*Cuba Socialista (August, 1966) contradicts this figure, although admitting that this 70 percent figure was commonly cited by Cuban government sources prior to a more careful survey. In 1966 Cuba Socialista argues that the more accurate figures are: socialized sector, 57%; private sector, 43%,

\*\*While we do not know the precise figures, wholesale purchases of agricultural products continued to be made by merchants, and peasants into 1968. This may also be true in other sectors, to varying degrees. In any case the 100% figure in the case of agriculture is simply inaccurate.

67. Bianchi, op cit., p. 100.

The first revolutionary agrarian reform law was promulgated on May 17, 1959 from the revolutionary movement's former base in the Sierra Maestra. The

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law is not lengthy and can be summarized as follows;

- 1) The law cites O. N. studies on agrarian reform and their mention of the importance of such reforms in order to accomplish two main goals:  
(a) "to facilitate and increase the growing of new crops to provide the nation's industries with raw materials and to meet food consumption requirements; to develop and expand those items of agricultural production intended for export, a source of foreign exchange for essential imports" and (b) "at the same time, to increase the consumer market by means of progressive improvement in the standard of living of those people in the rural areas, which will in turn contribute by expanding the domestic market. . . ."
- 2) The law cites the 1946 Agricultural Census, notes the high number of tenants, sharecroppers, squatters and absentee landlords, along with the negative social and economic consequences of these arrangements.
- 3) The law declares that the Constitution of 1940 and the "Organic Law of the Revolutionary Government" prohibit large landholdings and provide that measures to abolish such holdings permanently be provided by law; laws for expropriation of private property, when in the public interest, constitutionally exist.
- 4) The law notes *the* preferability of cooperative production and intensive cultivation over the extensive cultivation currently (1959) carried out, and the necessity of establishing an administrative agency to direct the conversion of agricultural production.
- 5) The law declares: "It is advisable to take measures to prevent the future alienation of Cuban land to foreigners." At this juncture the law cites Manuel Sanguily, a Cuban who introduced a bill in the Cuban congress in 1903 to prevent the control of Cuban resources by foreigners,

It seems clear that the first agrarian law looked for its legitimacy in Cuban history—not in a revolutionary future. It cited the 1940 Constitution and related itself to Cuba's traditional anti-American sentiments. This may have been a tactical consideration, as were the relatively moderate provisions of

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the law itself. Nevertheless, the legal provisions for the first agrarian

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68. I have used the English translation of the law which appears in T. Lynn Smith, ed, Agrarian Reform in Latin America, 1965, p. 145-152.

69. C. R. Rodriguez argues that the first agrarian reform was planned so as to insure the remine's consolidation. He states: "In this moment—September-October of 1958—Batista has practically lost the support of the lati-fundists and the owners of the sugar centrales who were precisely those

(continued on page 61)

measure were no more revolutionary than various other Latin American agrarian measures in the past. In this sense, the Cuban and Mexican experiences are similar: both relied for initial legitimacy on the past. The basic provisions of the law itself were as follows:

- 1) Large landholding is prohibited. The maximum area of land that a natural or juridical person may own shall be thirty caballerias (1 caballeria = 33.16 acres or 13.4 hectares). Land owned in excess of this limit will be expropriated for distribution among the peasants and agricultural workers who have no land. (Article I)
- 2) Privately owned land up to a limit of thirty caballerias per person shall not be subject to expropriation unless affected by contracts with tenant farmers who grow sugar cane, sub-tenant farmers and sharecroppers, or occupied by squatters, who hold parcels not larger than five caballerias in which case they also shall be subject to expropriation pursuant to the provisions of this law. (Article VI)
- 3) Beginning one year after the promulgation of the present law, corporations may not operate sugar plantations if they fail to meet the following requirements:
  - (a) all shares of stock shall be registered;
  - (b) that the holders of those shares shall be Cuban citizens;

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69. (con't.) who, under the orders of the imperialists, had given impulse to the coup of 10 March, 1952 and who had served as the firmest social base of the regime during the following six years. In vast zones of Oriente and in Las Villas the owners of the sugar centrales had come to pay taxes to the Rebel Army as a new revolutionary force. Likewise, the latifundists with cane fields and cattle interests sought to make an arrangement with the revolutionary forces and proposed to make contributions of various forms to support these forces. In these conditions it would not have been intelligent to promulgate an agrarian law that struck directly the large foreign and domestic latifundists. This would only have allowed them to retrench their forces around Batista and to let the forces of imperialism know the objects of the revolution before it had attained power. It would only have alerted the enemy.

It was, however, necessary to give the campesinos guarantees that their revolution was beginning without frightening the large land owners, but at the same time, giving them no guarantees for their properties. The instructions which Fidel emitted to the group charged with preparing the law clearly focused on this tactic. (Cuba Socialista, January 1966, p. 32)

\*With the hindsight of six years and the ideological evolution of Castro and the revolution, this explanation of the tactics employed in 1959 seems plausible. But we must remember that the course of the revolution might have been different, that the first agrarian law did permit the continuation of foreign holdings if "in the national interest". Ex post tactical explanations are at least subject to question.

(c) that the holders of those shares shall not be persons who appear as owners, stockholders, or officers of the companies engaged in the manufacture of sugar. (Note: the refining facilities were not affected; only the cane-lands.) (Article XIII)

4) Rural property may in the future only be acquired by Cuban citizens or companies formed by Cuban citizens.

Farms not larger than thirty caballerias which, in the judgment of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) are suitable for conveyance to foreign companies or entities for industrial or agricultural development considered beneficial to the development of the national economy are exempt from the foregoing provisions. (Article XV)

5) An area of two caballerias for fertile land, without irrigation, distant from urban centers, and devoted to crops of medium economic yield shall be established as a "vital minimum" for a peasant family of five persons. (Article XVI)

The land was to be distributed free to individual persons or cooperatives formed with the assistance of INRA. Priority was extended to squatters and tenants, and sharecroppers--on the land they were already occupying and cultivating. Legally, therefore, the Cuban agrarian reform, in its initial stages, resembled both the Mexican and other Latin American reform laws in its respect for private property (up to a limit of 30 ~~caballerias~~ 402 hectares), its emphasis on "giving the land to those who work it," and its attempt to eliminate the extensively farmed latifundia. Unlike the Mexican law there is no mention in the first Cuban legislation of collectives or ~~ejidal~~-type (communal) farming arrangements. The Cuban case is also similar to the Mexican case in that the agrarian reform law did not accurately reflect the operational impact of the reform program. But where the Mexican law was much more "radical" than the reform itself, the Cuban law only sketched the mildest and most conventional aspects of the reform as it affected the countryside. The Cuban revolutionary government took over the estates of former Batista officials and supporters; in 1959 it "intervened" most of the large cattle ranches (when the owners refused to buy young animals from the peasants who did not have enough land to maintain the animals after they reached a certain size). Finally, in 1960

more than 1,250,000 hectares belonging to American sugar mills were nationalized-- the day that Eisenhower eliminated the remainder of the Cuban sugar quota for that year. Three months later the Cuban centrales and their land were also nationalized; by the beginning of 1961 about 4,500,000 hectares had either been

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confiscated or expropriated. That is,, almost 50 percent of the total agricultural land in Cuba was affected by the agrarian reform in the first two

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years of the revolution.

Institutional Innovations. INRA. Beginning in June of 1959 Cuba was divided into 28 Zones of Agrarian Development (ZDA) which served as intermediate geographical-political areas between municipios and provincias (of which there are six in Cuba). In charge of each zone was a delegado from INRA (National Institute of Agrarian Reform), the newly created agency charged with carrying out the agrarian measures of the regime.

The importance of INRA surpassed any conventional definition of a "land reform" agency; Fidel Castro assumed the presidency of INRA and initially delegados of each zone were directly responsible to the revolution's Maximo. Along with "land reform" INRA had wide discretion in dealing with tax and trade policies, and coordination of housing, health, education and "police" services in the countryside. As Sergio Aranda argues:

During the initial period it was the policy of the government to assign INRA faculties that converted it into a 'superorganismos'<sup>2</sup>

The zonal delegados were granted relatively autonomous discretion over spending the zonal budget--including determination of zonal priorities in housing, schools, health facilities, and investment in the agricultural sector. For all practical purposes INRA, basing its power on Castro's charismatic authority and the Rebel

70. Bianchi, op cit., p. 103.

71. None of the corporate-commercial estates were subdivided. In the rice, cattle, and sugar sectors all were rapidly made into state farms. (Granjas del Pueblo, Granjas Cañeras.)

72. Sergio Aranda, La Revolución Agraria en Cuba, Siglo Veintiuno, Mexico, 1968, p. 177.



Army was the government in the countryside in the 1959-1961 period of agrarian reform. While some "counterrevolutionary activity" did appear, the level of violence was generally insignificant. Likewise, the countryside was relatively little damaged by the revolutionary struggle; unlike the Mexican case there was no need to "put the pieces back together." The revolution inherited the capital investment of rural Cuba almost completely intact.

In the initial stages of the agrarian reform three new types of production units were created by INRA on expropriated or confiscated holdings (none of which incorporated peasant cultivators, tenants or sharecroppers). These three types of units were: 1) agricultural cooperatives; 2) cane cooperatives; 3) INRA-administered farms.<sup>73</sup> All of these production units proved to be transitional; only the cane cooperatives survived the reorganization of 1961 and they too were transformed (into state cane farms--granjas cañeras) in 1962. Despite different names and organizational forms, all three types of these production units were in fact INRA directed production units. The so-called agricultural cooperatives were never cooperatives in the conventional sense i.e., producers uniting to deal collectively with factor or product markets, These "cooperatives"<sup>74</sup> had none of the boards or councils usually associated with cooperatives; from the outset the managers of the individual cooperatives were appointed by INRA from among the members of the production unit. Members were paid an "advance" of \$2.50 pesos per 8-hour day. In theory these "advances" were to be supplemented at the end of the year by a proportional share (according to the number of hours worked) of the cooperatives' net earnings. In fact, the lack of records prevented determination of benefits and no dividends were distributed.<sup>75</sup>

73. Bianchi, op. cit., p. 105.

74. According to Bianchi in May 1960, there were 881 agricultural cooperatives, of which 550 were devoted solely to crops, 10 to livestock, and 220 to mixed crop-cattle farming and the rest to poultry and exploitation of timber and coal. (106)

75. Ibid., p. 106.

The INRA-administered farms were organized primarily on the ex-cattle latifundia and some rice plantations.<sup>77</sup> By the beginning of 1960 the

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directly-administered farms numbered 475 with a total area of 900,000 hectares. The decision was made early not to divide the cattle estates or the highly capitalized rice operations, thus creating the first "state farms" in **fact**, if not in name, in this sector.

The first cane cooperatives were not created until June 1960. Agrarian reform in the sugar sector was postponed one year in order not to disrupt the 1960 harvest. Interestingly, the cane cooperatives were **formed** on the former "administration land" and incorporated the former wage workers of the cane plantations.<sup>78</sup> The colonos, those who leased land and were cultivators, were not included in the cane cooperatives, but ceded land according to the provisions of the agrarian reform law. While not directly managed by INRA, "advances" were paid members of the cane cooperatives, and redistribution of profits, if any, was limited by INRA to 20 per cent; the remainder was to be invested in construction of houses and other capital needs of the cooperatives.

Individual cane cooperatives were united into **associations** (agrupacion) which served as intermediate organisations responsible for **planning**, accounting and financial matters. Experienced ~~ingenio~~<sup>79</sup> personnel were often employed by INRA in these positions. The General **Administration** of Cane Cooperatives, an adjunct of INRA bore overall responsibility for development in the sugar sector,

Thus, in the cane cooperatives as well as in the agricultural cooperatives and INRA-administered farms, the transformation to "state farms" (granjas del

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76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., p. 108.

79. Aranda, op **cit**,, p. 180.

80. Ibid.

pueblo, (or granjas caneras) was not a radical change in the already existing situation. In reality, "the change was fundamentally reduced to making

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official a situation which had rapidly evolved." As Aranda points out:

There existed no spirit of cooperativism among the mass of workers. In the expropriated latifundias they found steady work for themselves and their families, as they desired, with a salary superior to what was normal in the Cuban countryside.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, the government made large expenditures in social overhead—schools, housings health facilities, etc., along with tiendas del pueblo (literally,

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people's stores) providing goods and consumer credit at reduced rates. It is apparent that from the outset the leaders of the Cuban revolution (in contrast to the Mexican case) viewed agrarian reform as an integral process.

Credit, marketing, agricultural extension and social services were all to be provided by government agencies which penetrated the countryside and assumed the functions the centrales or merchant-middlemen had previously fulfilled.

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81. Ibid., p. 132.

82. Ibid., p. 184.

83. As Bianchi tells us: "... the government invested heavily in rural housing, schools, and clinics. By December 1950, the housing department of IKRA had built or was building 49 small hospitals in the countryside . . . more than 60 rural schools had been finished by the same time. Construction was started on the Camilo Cienfuegos "school city" in the Sierra Maestra, designed to provide primary education to 20,000 peasant children upon completion. Teams of doctors were periodically sent to the countryside. . .

The rural population was also the principal beneficiary of the housing and public works programs of the government. Over 10,000 dwellings and more than 150 commercial developments, social centers, supermarkets, sports parks and other social projects were constructed by INRA in the first 2 years of the agrarian reform. Nearly 2,000 state stores (tiendas del pueblo), said to be capable of serving more than 400,000 peasants were set up in an attempt to improve the distribution of consumer goods in the countryside. New roads were opened to link cities and towns with isolated rural areas."

Unlike the Mexican peasant, the Cuban rural population was rapidly integrated into government-sponsored production units and appropriate mass organizations. Even the private sector of "independent" peasants was provided government financed services which encompassed almost the totality of the producers' needs and commitments. In this respect, the Cuban agrarian reform was a mobilization system par-excellence, where the Mexican agrarian revolution involved a much lesser degree of mass organization and far less extensive government penetration of the countryside and replacement of rural elites.

The three new types of agricultural production units formed in the 1959-61 period, despite their differences (e.g. the cane cooperatives were managed at the local level, the state farms more centrally administered—with poor results) all served as the foundation for an expanding public sector in Cuban agriculture, while incorporating the rural work force into the mobilization regime's network of mass organizations. As Aranda succinctly argues: "The cooperative, above all, is a political school for the workers of the countryside."

The Private Sector: In the private sector two major institutional changes occurred in the 1959-61 period: the extension of ownership titles to farmers cultivating less than the "vital minimum" and the limitation of most farms to the legal maximum of 402.6 hectares. While the distribution of titles began slowly, by February 1961, 32,823 peasants had become owners of the land they previously cultivated as sharecroppers, tenants or squatters. Generally, new peasant production units were not created; only the terms of tenure changed--tenants, and sharecroppers benefitting from the elimination of rents, and squatters from the legal right to exploit the land they already exploited. Thus, by changing the terms of tenure without affecting (in the 1959-61 period) substantially the production process, the agrarian reform in the peasant sector was accomplished without a decline in agricultural product.

84. Bianchi, op cit., p. 110.

85. Ibid.

In summarizing the results of the 1959-61 period, Bianchi presents the following "balance sheet":

- 1) overall crop production rose;
  - 2) sugar output came close to the all-time 1952 record;
  - 3) a start was made in the substitution of agricultural imports
  - 4) employment opportunities increased;
  - 5) social development was pushed vigorously, and for the first time a serious attempt was made to integrate the large rural population into the national life.
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- 1) the government allowed over-slaughtering of cattle, an avoidable error since it was predictable that the massive redistribution of income would lead to a greatly increased demand for beef;
  - 2) failure to keep accounting records in the cooperatives and ZDA's; little information was collected upon which serious planning could eventually be based; authorities had no way of knowing where crops were being produced more efficiently and why, obstructing efforts to improve the allocation of resources;
  - 3) too many resources were allocated to social (as opposed to economic) investments in agriculture: the quality of dwellings built in the countryside was excessive, for it was obtained at a sacrifice of quantity;<sup>86</sup>
  - 4) lack of concern with the private sector of agriculture (those with farms over 67 hectares) was a serious shortcoming in view of the relative importance of privately owned farms in the total picture.<sup>87</sup>

Administrative difficulties, over-enthusiasm, and over-investment in social overhead seem to summarize the negative aspects of the revolutionary regime's first agrarian reform measures. Weighed against the benefits to the rural population., the relative lack of violence in carrying out the reform, and the fact that no decrease was experienced in agricultural productions the first phases of the reform can only be judged as quits successful. Control over the countryside was established by governmental institutions, the support of the rural work force insured—all at the expense of some 4,000 large land owners,

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86. As Bianchi recognises, however, there were political advantages to investment in social overhead. Likewise, investment in education, in the long run, is probably one of the best uses of resources (especially at the primary level) in purely "economic" terms--as the human resources studies at the University of Chicago (Schultz, et al.) demonstrate.

87. Ibid., p. 121-122.

88. Chonchol, op cit. describes INRA takeover of farms in which he and the INRA delegado have lunch, amiably, with the former owner at the owner's farm house.

including the yanqui sugar interests. The power structure in the countryside shifted radically; there only remained the rural middle class as potential opposition to the regime. As C. R. Rodriguez has pointed out:

[after the first reform] . . . in the Cuban countryside remained some 10,000 proprietors who were acceptable in a process of democratic-bourgeois national liberation, but resulted incompatible with a socialist development. Of these 10,000 proprietors, 6,000 had extensions between 67 and 134 hectares for a total of 607,500 hectares, 3,000 occupied extensions between 134 and 268 hectares, having in all 610,000 hectares; and some 1,500 were proprietors of more than 268 hectares--within the limit of the 400 permitted--summing in total 500,000 hectares,

. . . From the first months of 1961 it is possible to say that these 10,000 survivors of the bourgeois were the only social sector that remained "nailed" (enclavado) into the Cuban economy as a residue of the anti-socialist economic forces.

. . . The Revolution knew that it had in these forces not only a potential enemy, but an existing enemy. The revolutionary leadership understood that the only correct strategy consisted in isolating the great mass of peasant workers, with their 200,000 families and productive units, from this powerful minority that controlled almost as much land as the peasants, the latter occupying 2.5 million hectares while the former maintained control of over 1.8 million.<sup>89</sup>

The Second Phase of the Agrarian Reform. In 1961 a reorganization of the agricultural sector took place. First, the INRA-managed cattle ranches were merged with the agricultural cooperatives to form state farms (granjas del  
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pueblo). The granjas were run by managers appointed by INRA; expenditures were financed directly from the INRA budget. Workers on the granjas received a net wage of 2.61 pesos per 8-hour day. Permanent workers were entitled to  
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free housing, medical care, and other social services. In May 1961, 266 state farms occupied nearly 2,500,000 hectares and provided employment to  
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almost 100,000 permanent or seasonal workers.

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89. C. R. Rodriguez, op cit., p. 34.

90. These units, according to Chonchol and Bianchi, were generally too large to be effectively administered and the crop diversification efforts which were made gave disappointing results.

91. Bianchi, op-cit., 174.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

Second, a nationwide association of small farmers (ANAP) was formed to absorb the specialised coffee, sugar, tobacco, etc, cultivators' associations that had existed prior to 1959. This organization served a dual function:

- 1) By proscribing membership in ANAP to proprietors of more than 67 hectares and guaranteeing the continuation of peasant holdings the revolution's leadership drew a clear line between the "peasantry" and the rural middle class, thus depriving the latter of the peasantry as potential allies; these peasants, however, continued to employ wage labor, especially in the harvest season.
- 2) By transferring INRA funds to ANAP for purposes of extending credit to the private-peasant sector the revolution initiated its policy according to which ANAP would serve,

to organize, unite and orient the small proprietors in the application of the agrarian program of our patriotic, democratic and socialist revolution. To labor in coordination with the distinct organisms of INRA and other revolutionary organs . . . organising and orienting the production of the proprietors in accord with the production goals that are established. . . 94

In this manner the revolution sought to integrate the peasant proprietors securely into the revolutionary fold, while creating a sectoral organization through which the government's policies could be communicated to the peasant-private sector. With a general administrator appointed by INRA, the administrative structure of ANAP was composed of provincial and regional delegations; at the base were local delegations of cane colonos, the peasant associations, and the credit and service cooperatives. In addition ANAP created a department of supplies and by 1962 was running almost 1,000 tiendas del pueblo.<sup>96</sup>

The 1961-62 period also saw an effort on the part of the remaining rural-bourgeois and land owners to initiate "counterrevolutionary-guerilla activity," ostensibly supported by refugee and American (CIA) resources. Efforts were made to recruit peasants to fight against "communism" (i.e. the eventual loss

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94. Cuba Socialista. May 1966, "Cinco Anos de la Vida de ANAP," p. 57.  
95. Bianchi, op cit., p. 126.  
96. Ibid.

of all private holdings) End to some extent these efforts were successful.

As Rodriguez confesses:

. . . the work of the enemy was made easier by our own errors. On the one hand certain local organs did not distinguish between rural bourgeois and old landlords who were leaders of these activities and certain small proprietors, attracted by propaganda, victims of fear or doubtful of the future, who collaborated with the enemy . . . An extremist policy affected-- through expropriations based on the laws applicable to counterrevolutionaries equally the real and permanent enemies and the confused temporary adversaries . . . [this] served the enemies by allowing them to create confusion among the peasant - workers in the province of Matanza and in the south of Las Villas, since they now felt no security with respect to the revolution's policies, seeing that owners of less than 67 hectares had been deprived of their holdings.<sup>97</sup>

Another factor which contributed to unrest among certain sectors was the "shortages" of foodstuffs and consumer commodities, accompanied by black market operations and speculation. With rents eliminated and additional employment provided for some 400,000 workers, purchasing power was increased (1959-61) by about 500 million pesos.<sup>98</sup> In addition many peasants now reserved more of what they produced for auto-consumption. Despite the fact that total agricultural production increased somewhat, it did not grow at the same rate as increased purchasing power. Middlemen; middle-class farmers and ex-landlords took advantage of this situation, (as did the peasants) buying the peasant's produce for purposes of speculation. This created a certain amount of pressure on the cities and towns, and on the revolutionary government.

In March 1962 ANA? was divested of direct responsibility for provision of credit and agricultural inputs to the peasants and directed to concentrate on "representing the peasants--and keeping the peasants informed of the revolution's goals and policies."<sup>99</sup> In order to re-affirm the peasantry's faith and commitment to the revolution the following measures were carried out:

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97. C. R. Rodriguez, op cit., p. 37.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.



- 1) Peasants were authorized "freedom of trade"--to sell directly to urban consumers; at the same time the regime made efforts to eliminate middlemen  
In the rural and urban areas;
- 2) INRA made efforts to establish acopios (warehouses) in all areas to make it more convenient for the peasants to deliver their produce to the government, if they so desired:
- 3) Prices for commodities were fixed so as to guarantee producers a price floor for particular products; prices were also used as incentives for production of crops that the revolution's leaders felt were "in demand."

These policies tended to re-establish the confidence of the peasants in the regime. In addition, Fidel Castro made his widely quoted speech (1963) in which he indicated that "Small proprietors will cultivate their land in the form they esteem convenient; as Individual farmers, as individual proprietors that belong to credit and service cooperatives or as members of sociedades agricolas" (collectively worked enterprises).

In October of 1963 the Second Agrarian Reform measure was applied; in theory all units over 67 hectares were expropriated (and the owners compensated), Aranda claims that this measure allowed 1,610,000 hectares to pass into the public sector. (This would fall about 200,000 hectares short of the 1.8 million that Aranda estimated for land held in units over 67 hectares).

According to Rodriguez,

In one day, under the direction of the party in each locale, the lands of the proprietors with more than 67 hectares were occupied. The rural bourgeois, landlords, and their counterrevolutionary allies were paralyzed and could do nothing to agitate the small peasant holders, the latter supporting the second reform from one end of the island to the other.<sup>100</sup>

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100. Rodriguez also notes that "a dramatic circumstance which added to this panorama and contributed even more to the uniting of the peasantry with the revolutionary government: cyclone "Flora." As is known, this disaster occurred at the same time that the second agrarian reform was applied. The cyclone struck in zones of the provinces of Camaguey and (continued p. 73)

With the elimination of the last vestiges of the old rural power structure the revolution (by 1964) was in total control of the countryside. <sup>101</sup> The peasant sector remained an important part of the economy but was integrated through ANAP and various producer arrangements to the state apparatus. Most of the peasants remained individual producers. Credit and service cooperatives, limited generally to the tobacco and coffee sectors, included in 1968 <sup>884</sup> local organizations with 53,069 proprietors occupying about 496,000 hectares. The sociedades agropecuarias, supposedly the "highest form" of socialist agricultural development, represented only 3200 peasants farming about 40,200 <sup>102</sup> hectares in 270 local organizations.

After five years (1959-64) Cuba had carried out a relatively complete transformation of the countryside. Unlike the Mexican revolution, the Cubans carried out an "integral" revolution from the outset, combining land reform with political-organizational and social policies to gain the support of the peasantry and control over the countryside. The principal beneficiaries of this process were the peasants and agricultural work force, at the expense of the old rural elites and to some extent the urban population.

There is no guarantee, however, that the peasants will be protected in perpetuity. In 1968 private buyers of produce were eliminated; this means that the peasants have only withholding of produce as an alternative to

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100. (Con't.) Oriente densely populated with small proprietors. . . . Defying death, Fidel Castro was found in the most dangerous places. The council of ministers with President Dorticos accompanied him. The air force, the army, the party, organized rescue operations. . . . Immediately reconstruction of the peasants' and workers' houses began. Bank debts were voided, productive animals were delivered to the peasants, credits were extended for the new crop.

. . . This . . . served to tighten even more the peasants identification with the revolutionary leadership in the instant when imperialism and its agents were confident that the nationalization of the old rural bourgeois and landlords would help drive a wedge between the revolution and the peasantry. (44)

101. Ibid., p. 44.

102. Aranda, op cit., p. 158.

delivering their products at the prices set by the government. (Another alternative is increased consumption, but this seems a relatively limited policy.) Likewise, the increasing ideological trend in Cuba toward a romantic-marxism (elimination of money, reliance on normative incentives, etc.) may eventually affect adversely the peasants' interests. The agricultural workers, however, are clearly in a more favorable position than prior to the revolution and seem unlikely to lose this position even if the revolution carries through on some of the ideologically-motivated experiments which it has discussed.

In any case, the peasants' position to date is clearly better than at any time before the revolution. If judgment were to be passed on the Cuban revolution through 1968, from the perspective of peasants or agricultural laborers, one could only say that it has been an undisguised blessing. If the Cuban revolution, has been less successful economically in the rural sector than the Mexican, the political and social results have been clearly more favorable. Insofar as the revolution intended to benefit the rural population, those who would argue that the revolution was betrayed are clearly in error.

#### CONCLUSION

The Mexican and Cuban Revolutions, despite some similarities, represent quite different experiences with "land reform". They started from different "stages of development": the first from a neo-feudal rural economy and society; the second from a capitalist agricultural sector and a large number of agricultural wage laborers. The two revolutions had a different conception of (and purpose for) land reform. In Mexico land reform was a process of land redistribution accompanied by minimal support of the newly created peasantry on the part of the government. In Cuba land reform was an integral process involving not merely a change in the conditions of land tenure, but of basic

social change—including the extension of a wide range of governmental services to the rural population.

The Mexican and Cuban agrarian revolutions had differential impact on the rural political systems. In Mexico traditional rural elites were never completely replaced, nor did the national regime completely monopolize control over the countryside. Local and regional politics remained significant phenomena. In Cuba traditional rural elites were eliminated and replaced functionally by government institutions. A further important difference in this respect was that Cuban rural elites were often absentee landlords and had little basis for appealing to peasants or rural workers for support against the regime. (Where owner-farmers did exist some amount of peasant support for counterrevolution did manifest itself.) Mexican rural elites managed often to raise peasant "armies" in order to fight one another; thus, some inter-strata linkages remained effective.

The Mexican Revolution never attained the ideological or political monolithicity of the Cuban regime. Diversity of interests continued to be recognized as legitimate within the revolutionary leadership. The Cuban regime, in contrast, quickly rejected even symbolic identification with a pluralist model and became almost a proto-type mobilization system.

There are, however, some important similarities between the two experiences that also need to be pointed out: 1) Both revolutions involved, to some extent, middle class leadership seeking the support of deprived rural sectors to carry out a nationalist revolution. While the intense nationalist stage of the Mexican Revolution had passed by 1940, it did occur simultaneously with a land reform program and efforts to alter traditional political configurations. Likewise, land reform in Cuba was accompanied by nationalist appeals, in the Cuban case a logical extension of the American penetration of the national economy.

2) In both cases there was great reluctance to redistribute commercial farm units to peasant proprietors. The Cubans simply rejected this alternative completely and created state farms. The Mexicans allowed the private sector to retain important commercial enterprises while experimenting to some extent with "collective ejidos". In this sense, neither the Mexicans nor the Cubans accepted peasant agriculture as a desirable economic alternative (despite some rhetoric to the contrary in the Mexican case). In both cases peasant agriculture was accepted as a necessary evil; in the Mexican case necessary for political reasons, and in the Cuban case for political and economic reasons.

Further., the Mexican Revolution carried out "land reform"; the Cubans an agrarian revolution in a political, social, and new, a technological sense. The differential results of these strategies suggest that:

- a) land distribution may be an effective time-buying device to relieve pressure on political institutions but,
- b) without substantial penetration of government agencies in the countryside, investment in social services, agricultural extension, and the provision of agricultural inputs and assistance in marketing, the peasantry remains dependent on traditional rural elites (landlords, merchants, middlemen)--who will retain substantial political and economic influence in the countryside;
- c) land reform (distribution or redistribution) is no substitute for integral political and economic change in the countryside that provides both government support and protection of the rural working class and peasantry in the period of transition.

Mexico retained large-scale private agricultural units. Cuba eliminated these completely. In both political and economic terms, the retention of such units is incompatible with the control that a mobilization regime or socialist government desires to exert over the countryside. Large-scale private enterprises provide alternative sources of inputs or serve as buyers for peasant producers; this implies relatively less government control over the agricultural economy, including the peasant sector, than is acceptable in a socialist political system. On the other hand, the Cuban case seems

to suggest that:

- a) certain crops are susceptible to efficient small-scale, small proprietor operations, and that with service and credit cooperatives as focii for agricultural extension agents, family farms can be useful economic units;
- b) the conservative political bias usually associated with peasants or small proprietors remains a problem ideologically, but in terms of political and economic control, a national regime can effectively use price mechanisms, credit, wage rates, etc. to produce desired economic outcomes. Accompanied with mass political organizations and effective primary socialization, peasants or small proprietors are not necessarily a threat to a socialist regime--and may be loyal supporters.

A sector of small proprietors, if their income potential creates no rural middle class (i.e. significant social differentiation from the agricultural wage earners) is more a threat to ideological purists than to the regime's monopoly of political power in the countryside.

The corollary to this, of course, is that once the alternative sources of inputs or buyers for their products is eliminated, the peasants are essentially dependent upon the regime. Recognition of this fact by the peasantry, when government policy does not take into account the peasants' interests, may lead to rather traditional forms of peasant resistance--hoarding, black market operations, and "non-cooperation" etc. In this sense, it remains true that if the agrarian sector is to be sacrificed to accelerated industrialization efforts or ideological prescriptions, the peasants are an obstacle to the regime. The Cubans, however, at least to date, have demonstrated that if the goals of the regime include increasing agricultural outputs winning the loyalty of the rural populations and establishing political control of the countryside the peasants, at least temporarily, can be positive contributors to the regime's success.

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