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*The New Agrarian
Movement in Mexico
1979-1990*

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The New Agrarian Movement in Mexico

1979-1990

Introduction

Recent research on Mexican popular movements has focused attention on the new elements which have characterised political strategies and forms of internal organisation in the 1980s. It has also tried to establish the ways in which new movements have made an impact on the political system. In approaching these issues, we need to be wary of either romanticising or dismissing particular movements and instead look for the precise nature of their novelty and political importance.¹ This paper attempts to draw out what is new about two national peasant movements in Mexico which operate independently of the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and its affiliated Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC). These are the Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala (CNPA), formed in 1979 and the Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas (UNORCA), formed in 1985. As Appendix I shows, they are only two of many peasant movements currently active in Mexico. They have been chosen precisely because they are 'new' in that they have both sought to retain autonomy from all political parties and to promote broad participation of the base.²

The extent to which autonomy from parties and decentralised decision-making have been achieved has, of course, been contingent on more than just an alternative vision of collective action, although this element should not be forgotten. Without anticipating too much of what is to follow, we can say that peasant movements in Mexico have been pushed into a defensive position in the 1980s, which has had a negative impact on their attempts to build more democratic forms of internal organisation. Absorbed by the day-to-day necessity of surviving the economic crisis, influential groups within CNPA and UNORCA steered clear of the electoral arena just when it was becoming the regime's weakest flank. Other member organisations, tempted by political parties, exercised their right to make up their own minds and support opposition candidates. As a result, CNPA was weakened by internal divisions, while some UNORCA groups supported the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in the 1988 presidential elections. Others supported the centre-left coalition led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Although relations between peasants and his new Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) cannot be described as 'organic', the emergence of *neocardenismo* may be of central importance for both the party and the new agrarian movement in the 1990s.

The paper begins by addressing a currently influential argument within the Mexican government that the new agrarian movement is capable of taking over many of the functions of the State as it retreats under the weight of

fiscal crisis and in response to the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund. To be sure, there are some suggestive examples of self-management, or *autogestión*, which the authorities are keen to publicise. Yet the reality for the majority of peasants in Mexico in 1990 is not so encouraging. It was not much better in 1980 but the failures of the short-lived Sistema Alimentario Mexicano (SAM) in 1980-1982 have been compounded one hundred-fold by the neoliberal policies implemented in response to the debt crisis. By focusing on a handful of promising successful cases we are only blinding ourselves to the desperate plight of the many unsuccessful ones. The new agrarian movement is not just the productive and the relatively autonomous. It is also the weak, the undercapitalised, the dependent and the repressed. For the capacity of poor peasants to mobilise against government policies is not in doubt. Countless marches, demonstrations and national meetings are evidence of this. In short, there is much scepticism regarding the extent to which self-managed, democratic production can be developed within the government's current macro-economic strategy.

The discussion then turns to the thorny question of what is new about today's agrarian movement. Historians as familiar with Mexican politics as Alan Knight are entitled to ask if the movements we see are really new or is it simply that our research interests have changed (Knight, 1990). The answer is probably both, at least in this case. The state-centred analyses of Mexico's political development, which seemed at one point as monolithic as the regime they sought to describe, provoked enough youthful dissatisfaction to shift attention towards the under-researched associations of post-1968 civil society. At its peril, the research programme, like many I suspect, paid only lip service to the period after 1940, half accepting the statist thesis, while convinced that it was no longer applicable to the 1970s and 1980s. Returning to 'history', we find that all was not calm in 1940-1965 and that the tradition of peasant struggle did not go underground but continued to present a radical challenge to the ruling party as it turned rightwards.

Yet the empirical evidence suggests that a qualitatively different type of peasant movement existed in this period, one which was closely related to political parties and often characterised by single leaders. These features were part of their strength, but also part of the problem. When parties and leaders became targets for repression or candidates for co-optation, peasant movements suffered as a result. The changes since 1968 are therefore seen with that backdrop in mind, rather than a simplistic one of an all pervasive State and a docile civil society. Furthermore, the continuities in peasant movements are inescapable. Are there any demands with a greater resonance in Mexican history than those for land and liberty?

The middle sections of the paper discuss the emergence and development of CNPA in its struggle for land and UNORCA in its struggle for control over production and marketing. The final section discusses the response of the new agrarian movement to the presidential elections of 1988 and their

position towards Cárdenas and the PRD, on the one hand, and the initiatives taken by the Salinas government on the other. The conclusions reflect on the political implications of the changes in State-peasant relations brought about by neoliberalism and the economic crisis and the challenge which now faces groups such as CNPA and UNORCA.

The new agrarian movement: self-management and self-defence

Several authors have argued that the breakdown of corporatist control and the liberation of the creative potential of the peasantry from the corrupt network of private intermediaries, regional bosses (*caciques*) and State agencies are necessary conditions for the solution of Mexico's agricultural crisis. Pointing to the positive experiences of autonomous producer organisations in Sonora, Nayarit, Hidalgo and Chiapas, Rello maintains that the collective action of the peasantry could be the main force in the transformation of the agrarian structure and of the global project of economic development.³ Despite the obstacles, Rello places his faith in the 'transforming potential of collective action'. The elements which he identifies as important to such a project are several.

First, there is the strength of community solidarity in the defence of its interests, in spite of a hostile political environment. Secondly, despite initial defeats, the capacity for collective action is something which can be conserved and augmented, becoming the 'social energy' of a movement which determines subsequent advances. The historical memory of earlier struggles feeds into popular conceptions of present ones, providing lessons from the past. Rello thus criticises the pessimistic view which conflates short-term failures with permanent weakness. A more historical perspective reveals the continuity of peasant resistance in Latin America.⁴ Furthermore, collective action was central to the construction of democratic institutions and the defence of social rights in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe. Finally, the increased sense of empowerment through achievement of basic demands can break with resignation and dependence on outside agents. Collective action can provide an organised response to social inequalities and increase self-confidence through a cumulative process. Although this process is often halted by regional power structures, it leaves behind a sediment of participatory experience which can be used to greater effect in more favourable circumstances.

Otero also argues that self-managed, democratic control of production is a viable grassroots alternative to the full proletarianisation of the rural labour force, most of which is employed only seasonally as wage labour. He illustrates his argument with the successful example of the Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles Yaqui y Mayo (CECVYM) of Sonora, which was formed following President Echeverría's celebrated expropriation of

private owners in December 1976 (Sanderson, 1981). Otero claims that the CECVYM constitutes a model of 'post-capitalist' production, since its members control production decisions in a democratic manner. He says:

'...the CECVYM today provides exemplary organizational lessons in both political (democratic and independent) and economic (productive) terms for the agrarian movement in Mexico and elsewhere.'⁵

Indeed, the Coalition became an attractive model for regional producer organisations from other states who came to visit and learn from its experience.

Without dismissing the achievements of CECVYM and the arguments which Otero, Rello and others use to suggest its potential social and political importance, it should be remembered that the Coalition has had the unusual advantage of being in possession of prime irrigated land. The possibilities to develop an alternative political organisation were enhanced by a sound economic base. This cannot be said for most of the country's social sector. In most regions the obstacles to self-managed production remain formidable. According to official data, only 1.8 per cent of lands held by the social sector is irrigated. Most is located in rain-fed regions.⁶

Nevertheless, such cases have provided part of the government bureaucracy with a strong argument for transferring functions to the social sector. The most influential voice in this respect has been that of Gustavo Gordillo, who was named sub-secretary of social pacts ('*concertación*,') of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (SARH) in December 1988. Gordillo was one of the main advisors to groups such as the CECVYM and through this experience argued for the need for the appropriation of the productive process by the direct producers (Gordillo, 1988). The main problems he identified were the corruption and inefficiency of the State agencies which dealt with the ejido sector which excluded peasants from decision-making and from control over the distribution of their surplus. This line of thought became important in several regions during the 1980s as new producer organisations emerged to demand control over production, credit and marketing, most of which joined in the formation of UNORCA in 1985. In the context of an economic crisis which has hit the social sector hardest, peasant organisations of all affiliations have come together to defend their interests. Fox and Gordillo have thus argued that we should no longer speak of a strict dichotomy between 'official' and 'independent' organisations, but of the emergence of a new middle ground, or 'political grey area' occupied by alliances of nominally official and independent movements whose common aim is to reduce their vulnerability in the market and their dependence on the State.⁷

Fox and Gordillo point out that such a process of realignments could lead in one of two directions. On the one hand, the new relationship with the State

could privilege those groups which have relatively good land or productive potential at the expense of the majority of poorer peasants. On the other, this new political grey area could be extended to include the latter. For Fox and Gordillo the direction of the new agrarian movement depends on the strategic choices of peasant leaders.

While most authors share this appreciation for grassroots autonomy, many are sceptical that the existing balance of forces favours such a transformation. Sarmiento (1989) argues that the crisis has broken up the corporatist pact between the State and the labour and peasant sectors, while in its place a new, neo-corporatist relation is being established. Carlsen also argues that groups such as those affiliated to UNORCA may underestimate the strength and tenacity of corporatism and overestimate the government's willingness to sacrifice political control in favour of modernisation of production. Furthermore, she warns against the real possibility that the new leaders will become co-opted by bureaucratic agencies.⁸ Finally, Hernández argues that since 1988 the government's policy of negotiation with opposition movements has tended to favour the more consolidated organisations with some experience of self-management in production. He adds that the majority of poor peasants in rain-fed regions, and agricultural workers, without strong organisations, have been left without representation and without resources. This reveals the other side to the policy of negotiation: exclusion.⁹

García de León (1989) is even more pessimistic regarding the fate of the agrarian movement in Mexico. He argues that in the past decade peasant movements have taken up defensive positions as a result of the economic crisis. Immediate survival has become the main concern, displacing the overtly political tone which characterised the movements of the 1970s. As a result, an infinite number of dispersed and atomised movements have struggled to keep afloat in a sea of poverty and exclusion created by the debt crisis and the austerity measures.¹⁰

García de León adds that the optimistic belief in the emergence of collective agents, who are capable of providing solutions to injustice and inequality, has been overtaken by the dramatic reality of the crisis. In their struggle to survive, peasant movements have directed their demands towards the State in isolated fashion. The latter can thus respond with divide-and-rule tactics, offering selective concessions while isolating movements from the new political force which emerged in support of the presidential candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in 1988. He laments that some organisations which maintained an anti-party position failed to take notice of the importance of the *cardenista* movement in 1988. Despite the dubious election results, by January 1989 most peasant organisations were negotiating agreements for resources with the President and discussing the formation of a new national body to include official and independent movements, known as the Congreso Agrario Permanente (CAP). As a result, leaders gradually became absorbed by negotiations with middle-level bureaucracy. The

negotiation table, not the Zócalo, has become the point at which to apply pressure. The new 'political grey area', in which Gordillo and others placed their hopes, has turned out to be the CAP, which may represent nothing more than 'the sum of defeated forces'.¹¹

Indeed, the devastating impact of the economic crisis in the countryside cannot be overstated. A brief survey of the official statistics gives some idea of the extent to which peasant demands have been disregarded in the past decade. The agricultural sector suffered more than any other from the austerity measures imposed after 1982, suggesting that the boom in manufacturing exports was in part financed at the expense of the decapitalisation of the rural sector, particularly the social sector. Public spending in agriculture fell from 8.1 per cent of the total budget in 1980 to 3.5 per cent in 1986.¹² Between 1983 and 1987 the budget of those government agencies which operate in the countryside fell by 62.3 per cent.¹³ The share which agriculture received of the total amount of credit provided by the nationalised banking system fell from 15.2 per cent in 1982 to 8.2 per cent in 1986. At the same time, credit became more expensive as interest rates jumped from 12.5 per cent to 96 per cent in 1982-88. In 1987, of 28,000 ejidos existing in Mexico only 12,000 received credit and of 8.5 million hectares under maize cultivation only 3 million were insured against crop failure. In real terms the amount of public expenditure in agriculture in 1986 had fallen below the 1973 level.¹⁴

The decapitalisation of the rural economy was exacerbated by increasing production costs. Between 1981 and 1987 the guarantee price for maize increased by a factor of 37.6, while the cost of diesel oil went up by 178, gasoline by 82 and tractors by 64.3. It has been calculated that in 1982 it cost 35 tonnes of beans or 84.7 tonnes of maize to buy one tractor. In 1988 the same tractor cost 71 tonnes of beans or 152.1 tonnes of maize.¹⁵

Decapitalisation and spiralling production costs have obviously had an uneven impact on different groups of rural producers. The capitalist farmers who rely more on the use of wage labour than capital investment (in tomatoes, strawberries, melons, etc.) have tried to compensate for depressed prices by holding down wages. For their part, the poor and middle peasants have had to reduce their consumption levels as income has been squeezed. Agricultural workers are employed at salaries half their 1976 level while *ejidatarios* are obliged to rent land to multinational companies for whom they work as peons. According to a study carried out at the Autonomous University of Chapingo, nutrition levels in some areas of rural Mexico have returned to their 1936 level.¹⁶ A former Minister of Health estimates that approximately 50 per cent of the rural population currently suffers from first, second or third degree malnutrition.¹⁷ According to UNICEF, Mexico now figures among the countries with a high risk of malnutrition and infant mortality. Absenteeism from school and poor performance are also seen as related to poor diet. Of course, these are structural problems with long roots

and external determinants which go beyond the policies of the past eight years. Yet it is not clear that shifting responsibilities from the State to the market has provided adequate responses to the problems of rural poverty.

If the problems of *ejidatarios* were bad enough, then the landless were even more unfortunate. The agrarian policy of President José López Portillo (1976-82) was designed to regain the confidence of private landowners after their clashes with his predecessor, Luis Echeverría (1970-76). Declaring that land reform would be brought to an end in his term, the president announced a new era in which productivity would come before redistribution. The landowners' associations breathed a sigh of relief. However, the new regional peasant movements were not convinced. Land invasions continued but now, in a different political context, came up against repression.

Through co-ordinated actions and mass mobilisations, the issue of land reform was kept alive until the next *sexenio*. The government of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-88) used another tactic to bring agrarian reform to a close: the National Programme for the Register of Rural Property and the Regularisation of Land Tenure, or Catastro Rural. The programme was designed to document via satellite pictures the structure of land tenure in the entire Republic. Many landowners who held areas exceeding the legal limits of what are euphemistically known as 'small properties' moved quickly to protect their holdings for fear of expropriation. There was an unprecedented rise in the number of petitions for certificates of non-affectability which protect owners from the possibility of expropriation for the purposes of redistribution. With the help of computer technology, the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (SRA) responded to the wishes of the CNA. The percentages of certificates issued by the de la Madrid government as proportions of all certificates issued since 1917 were 95 per cent in the case of cattle ranchers and over 50 per cent in the case of crop producers.¹⁸ Satellite photography, computerised data banks and laser printers, all at the service of *neolatifundismo*.

Meanwhile, land hunger continued as employment opportunities shrank in the rest of the economy. By 1987 petitioners were still waiting for the implementation of one thousand presidential resolutions in favour of redistribution, covering over 7.6 million hectares. Another 8 million hectares are protected by certificates of non-affectability which are no longer valid and another 1.5 million hectares are claimed as exceeding the legal limits.¹⁹ According to official figures, by the end of 1986 some 43.2 per cent of the rural economically active population, some 3.2 million persons, were landless.²⁰

The scale of these problems for the new agrarian movement is not lost on peasant leaders. In a realistic assessment which nevertheless holds out some hope, Javier Gil, a member of the national co-ordinating committee of UNORCA and co-ordinator of the CAP in 1989 says:

'Maybe we won't even figure in the picture that is Mexico in the year 2000. Maybe we will be overrun by the multinationals. But for that reason we have to act now. It all depends on the balance of forces. We must change them with our actions, with our proposals, our alternatives. We cannot wait and expect the State to intervene out of the goodness of its heart and protect us. Things have changed and we have to take our part in the defence of the social sector because no-one will do it for us.'²¹

Nevertheless, according to Emilio García of CNPA, the formation of the CAP has undermined an earlier effort to form a truly independent movement on a national scale and has allowed the government to contain the opposition to its policies for modernisation:

'Five of the ten independent organisations which had signed the *Convenio de Acción Unitaria* (CAU) in December 1988 left to join the CAP. Although they said they would support both projects, in practice they have spent more time with the latter. This is understandable since it has more chance of achieving something, given that the government has supported it. But it means that the movement is divided. For example, on April 10, the anniversary of Zapata's assassination, CNPA marched to the *Zócalo* almost alone. This time the other organisations were in Cuautla, signing agreements with the government for their projects. The CAP has tended to deactivate the movements, the leaders have been tied closer to the negotiating table and do not mobilise to protest against everything else that is going on, the repression, the landlessness, the lack of democracy, etc. Yes, we must negotiate with the government but avoid being co-opted.'²²

Government policy does not, of course, respond solely to the pressures of the IMF and the World Bank. As Javier Gil notes, groups such as UNORCA and CNPA are engaged in an ideological and political struggle to win over the balance of forces in favour of the social sector. Since 1982 this balance has clearly favoured the private agro-export sector, which became organised as the *Consejo Nacional Agropecuario* (CNA) in 1984. The CNA also had the political backing of Manuel Clouthier, the presidential candidate of the conservative *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN) in 1988. Its strength as a pressure group was seen by the massive distribution of certificates of non-affectability and it was able to use its political weight in support of PAN candidates in the northern states. The CNA has also demanded the liberalisation of guarantee prices and the privatisation of parastatal companies dealing with production, marketing and inputs.²³

Change within continuity: independent peasant movements and 1968

If the new agrarian movement is more than a relatively small number of successful cases of self-management, then we need to establish where its novelty lies. Rather than representing a radically new development in Mexico, CNPA and UNORCA should be seen in historical perspective as inheritors of a long tradition of peasant struggles. Not surprisingly, they have also brought new perspectives to these struggles.

Historically, Mexican peasants have been among the most rebellious and revolutionary in Latin America (Coatsworth, 1988). Central to their mobilising capacity has been a degree of autonomy from the State. The revolutionary army led by Emiliano Zapata in 1910-1919 grew out of the indigenous villages of Morelos. The villages provided the physical and political space with which to organise and plan the recuperation of communal land from encroaching sugar planters. Moreover, they were centres of self-government, where decision-making was organised independently of the State and the ruling classes. The struggle of the *zapatistas* was therefore not simply for land but also for municipal autonomy (Gilly, 1980; Warman, 1988). Their military and political defeat, combined with the assassination of Zapata in 1919 by supporters of President Venustiano Carranza, undermined the autonomy of peasant communities. Agrarian reform became institutionalised by the post-revolutionary governments and *zapatistas* had to petition for the recognition of lands which they had taken back in the phase of armed struggle. However, the programme proceeded slowly as national politicians feared alienating the more productive landowners.

Redistribution in the 1920s was dependent on the linkages between regional strongmen, or *caudillos*, and the federal government. The administration of President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-28) and those of his loyal successors tried to subdue reformist state governors whom they considered a threat to the centralisation of power. Repression became commonplace, forcing many peasant leagues into a defensive position.

Consequently, when Lázaro Cárdenas stood for the presidency in 1934 he received massive support in rural areas. As governor of Michoacán he had implemented a broad programme of land redistribution. In his struggle to free himself of the influence of Calles, Cárdenas found important allies in the labour and peasant movements. The re-organisation of peasant leagues affiliated to the official party was completed with the foundation of the CNC in 1938. The repression of the Calles years, combined with the Cárdenas reforms, led most of the organised peasantry into forming an alliance with a government committed to expanding support for the social sector.²⁴

However, the subordination of the CNC to the ruling party and the State was made clear after 1940 when official policy shifted in favour of private

agribusiness interests. The shift had begun towards the end of Cárdenas's presidency due to fears of lost investment and landowner support for fascism in Mexico, but was unambiguously adopted by the administrations of Manuel Avila Camacho (1940-46) and Miguel Alemán (1946-52). Reforms to the Agrarian Code in 1942 and 1946 made protection from expropriation easier to obtain, while public investment in irrigation works and rural infrastructure and preferential credit were targeted on large-scale agro-export enterprises in the north-west. The political weakness of the CNC was revealed by its failure to mobilise effectively against the counter-reform measures (Huizer, 1982; Hardy, 1984). At the same time, attempts to organise along independent lines were frustrated by the governments of Miguel Alemán, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-58) and Adolfo López Mateos (1958-64).

From the mid-1940s on, regional independent movements emerged as grassroots leaders became frustrated with the slow pace of agrarian reform. The most important of these was in Morelos where, between 1945 and 1962, Rubén Jaramillo led a mass movement in protest against the corruption of local sugar mill owners and in favour of land reform and democratisation of municipal and state government. The movement not only fought over agrarian issues, but also on the electoral front as the Partido Agrario Obrero Morolense (PAOM). The two fronts of struggle, as for Zapata, remained inextricably linked due to the economic power wielded by those in political office. It was precisely the PAOM's political threat that provoked the intransigence of the authorities. Perhaps a less 'political' and more 'agrarian' movement would have been accommodated in a more amenable way. However, the point is that the 'agrarian' in Mexico is also the 'political'. The problem for peasant movements has traditionally been how best to operate 'politically': in the narrow sense of electoral struggle, in the broader sense of raising consciousness or, as in the case of the PAOM, a combination of both. As it was, the *jaramillistas* were forced into clandestinity by government repression and set up armed self-defence units to protect peasant lands against local *caciques*. Although Jaramillo won the solidarity of other popular movements in nearby Mexico City, it was not enough to resist the attacks which were co-ordinated by local elite groups. Following a brief period of legalised political activity, in May 1962 Jaramillo and his family were captured and executed by troops and judicial police. No culprit was ever found (de Grammont, 1988a).

In the more general context of popular discontent with the reversal of Cárdenas's reforms, dissident labour unions and peasant movements joined the Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México (UGOCM) in 1949, affiliated to the new Partido Popular (PP).²⁵

In the north-western states the UGOCM and PP confronted similar responses to those seen in Morelos. When the UGOCM led land invasions in 1958 its principal leader, Jacinto López, was imprisoned along with other important members. Moreover, when the disputed lands were distributed it

was the CNC and not the UGOCM which benefited most, despite the fact that the latter had been at the forefront of the struggle (de Grammont, 1988b). Whereas in Morelos the party-movement link provoked repression, in the case of the PP-UGOCM link the response was more complex. The PAOM was a regionally defined party and its candidates did not aspire to seats in the national government. The PP, on the other hand, was a national party of the opposition, led by the former *cardenista* Vicente Lombardo Toledano. The PRI offered some concessions to the PP leadership in exchange for its 'loyal opposition' in the Chamber of Deputies. This coincided with Lombardo's preferred strategy of avoiding confrontations with the government and seeking incremental gains by getting PP candidates elected (and then ratified) by the ruling party. This strategy was seen by Jacinto López as doomed to failure, given the size of the PRI majority. In fact, Lombardo was criticised for putting his personal well-being before that of the party and the UGOCM. A split was avoided until 1967 but relations were inevitably strained. As the PP leadership became divorced from the base, the UGOCM in Sonora and Sinaloa suffered setbacks in their struggle to defend the social sector. As a result, it was unable to resist the offensive of the right in the early 1960s and finally split into an independent and a pro-government faction in 1973.

The third major challenge to the government's agrarian policies came in 1963 with the formation of the Central Campesina Independiente (CCI). This was the largest opposition confederation and brought together some of the most distinguished regional leaders, including Ramón Danzós Palomino from the Yaqui Valley of Sonora, Arturo Orona from the collective ejidos of the Comarca Lagunera (Coahuila and Durango) and Alfonso Garzón from Baja California. More importantly, the CCI was not an isolated peasant movement but formed a central part of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN), a broad left coalition led by Lázaro Cárdenas, which united the major *cardenista* and Communist groups displaced from power in the previous two decades. Like the UGOCM, the CCI demanded the revitalisation of land reform, an end to repression, democratisation and respect for the right to organise independently of the ruling party and its union confederations.

In 1964 the government again used repression in an attempt to demoralise the CCI, imprisoning its most radical leaders, including Danzós Palomino. In the context of the Cuban Revolution and the anti-communist propaganda from the right, the MLN and CCI were soon forced onto the defensive and their offices were ransacked by police. A split emerged in the CCI as the more moderate factions led by Humberto Serrano and Alfonso Garzón restated their support for the government and tried to expel the communist-affiliated faction.²⁶ Serrano and Garzón gave their support to the administration of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-70) while the communists remained independent of the PRI but seriously weakened. Following the release of Danzós Palomino, the latter group renamed itself the Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (CIOAC) in 1975.²⁷

The lessons of the PAOM, UGOCM and CCI were confronted by the next generation of activists who sought to maintain the vision of 'land and liberty'. This remarkable generation was comprised of students, school teachers, Catholic lay preachers and priests, and the sons of *ejidatarios* and *comuneros* (members of indigenous communities). Each group emerged from simultaneous processes of social change: the expansion of university education and the teacher training programme for rural areas, the option for the poor taken by the Catholic Church and the increasing pressure on available land. Together they shaped the political strategies and forms of organisation which peasant movements adopted in the 1970s.

The year 1968 marks an important break in Mexican political history. The regime suffered a deep crisis of legitimacy following the repression of the student movement at Tlatelolco. It responded with a revival of populism but had to go further than in previous administrations and open to a greater degree the political system to the opposition. Yet, for the peasant movements, lessons had to be drawn from the experiences of the previous decades. A central current within the student movement, with links to rural teacher training colleges, held that the left's strategy of seeking socialism via parliamentary means was mistaken. The renamed Partido Popular Socialista (PPS) and the PCM were criticised for their lack of organic links with the people and for their centralised internal structures. Instead, the task was to turn the model upside down and build democratic mass organisations from the bottom-up. In the early 1970s thousands of students went to villages and poor urban neighbourhoods, or *colonias populares*, to put the Maoist theory of the 'mass line' into practice. Socialism was conceived as something constructed through long-term politicisation of economic demands, not as the imminent smashing of the State. The failure of the guerrilla movements in Mexico served to confirm this position. State power was to be eroded by an increasingly politicised mass movement, not overthrown in an instant. This strategy also allowed for concrete demands to be met in the process. This current began life as Política Popular (PP) in 1968 and in the 1970s developed into two tendencies: the Línea de Masas (LM) in the urban context and the Línea Proletaria (LP) in the rural areas and among industrial unions.

In the countryside, the student activists joined forces with new leaders from the communities themselves. These latter often included sons of peasants who had trained to be teachers or participated in bible readings promoted by liberation theology. In areas where the CNC had been traditionally dominant, this new generation criticised the corruption of their leaders and the lack of participation of the base in decision-making. In areas where opposition movements such as those described above were active, peasants were wary of repeating earlier mistakes. In general, a critique of past strategies and forms of organisation gained acceptance around two issues: the relationship to political parties of the opposition; and the relationship between

leaders and base. In most cases the demands remained the same, although an increasing emphasis on issues of production became common after 1976.

The repression of those peasant groups most closely identified with the PAOM, MLN, Partido Popular and PPS was one reason why the post-1968 movements adopted an independent position towards all political parties. More importantly, however, in most parts of Mexico in the early 1970s there were no opposition parties seeking to mobilise the rural masses. The PAOM and MLN had disappeared, while the PPS supported the government. The PCM, as the students argued, had little presence in the countryside. Nevertheless, the strategy proposed was not to build another party-movement alliance. Electoral struggle was considered a deviation from the main issues of politicisation and resolving basic demands. The strategy was also facilitated by the revival of agrarian populism under Echeverría. New resources were made available for rural development projects, reformist functionaries proved important allies for nascent regional organisations of small producers and the expansion of federal bureaucracy often provided a counter-balance to the power wielded by local *caciques*. Autonomy from parties also coincided with that of the new ecclesiastical base communities which had emerged, especially in areas of high indigenous population in the southern and central states.

A related criticism of past experience was that leaders tended to become divorced from the base and inhibited broad participation. This had not happened with the PAOM and Jaramillo, suggesting that a more regionally focused organisation had greater chance of reproducing itself over time if different political conditions prevailed. However it was the case for most of the groups affiliated to the CNC and the official wing of the CCI. At the ejido level this critique was not made solely out of a respect for democracy. Rather, in some regions, not all, it was linked to the incapacity of leaders to resolve basic problems over land, water, services, etc. It is against this backdrop that the attempt to construct politically autonomous and decentralised networks of regional peasant organisations should be seen. This is the reason why we can call CNPA and UNORCA the main peasant movements which make up the new agrarian movement of the 1980s.²⁸

The Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala (CNPA) and the struggle for land

During the first half of the 1970s new peasant organisations emerged in several states in response to the failure of agrarian reform and the increasing pressure on the land brought about by the expansion of commercial agriculture, cattle ranching and new State-financed projects such as the construction of hydroelectricity dams and oil exploration. The high point of a revived but limited agrarian reform, Echeverría's redistribution of prime irrigated land to collective ejidos in Sonora in December 1976, proved to be

the last of its kind as the new government of López Portillo immediately moved to regain the confidence of the private sector. Land invasions, which occurred in almost every state in 1975, were no longer to be tolerated and met with repression (Bartra, 1980). Between 1976 and 1979 the new movements were pushed into a defensive position in which confrontation with the government became common. However, each movement began to see the need for greater unity at the regional and national levels.

In 1979, various events were organised to mark the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Emiliano Zapata and to discuss the agrarian issue. In March a national meeting was held at the Autonomous University of Guerrero, attended by representatives from several of the movements engaged in land struggles in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz and Guerrero. This meeting provided the space for the first contacts to be made between organisations and for the exchange of testimonies, ideas and proposals for unity. The following month a national gathering of independent movements was held in Morelos, called by the Unión de Ejidos Emiliano Zapata (UEEZ). Two main positions began to emerge. Firstly, to continue the struggle for land, despite the government's insistence that agrarian reform had ended. Secondly, to oppose the government's plans to take the remains of Zapata from Cuautla, Morelos to bury them alongside those of Venustiano Carranza at the Monument to the Revolution in Mexico City. This struggle to retain popular control over the symbolic importance of Zapata was supported by students, teachers and peasants who blockaded the central square of Cuautla to prevent the removal of the remains. The struggle also accelerated the process of unification of the independent peasant movement. Representatives from over forty groups from sixteen states met again in June at the National Peasant Meeting organised by the Autonomous University of Chapingo and called for the formation of a unified front.²⁹

In August, one of the organisations calling for such a front, the Movimiento Nacional Plan de Ayala (MNPA), invited all participants in the earlier meetings to its first national congress.³⁰ Around thirty organisations attended. However, the meeting was also attended by representatives of *priista* confederations and formed part of the official celebrations to commemorate the life of Zapata. The government's attempt to control the meeting and establish a new corporatist pact was rejected by many of the participants.

In October the first national meeting of independent peasant organisations was held in Milpa Alta, on the southern edge of Mexico City. The meeting was dominated by a struggle between pro-government organisations, led by the son of Zapata, Mateo, and those which favoured an independent position. The former argued that it was necessary to support the government's policies to provide assistance to small producers in rain-fed regions, which were embodied in the SAM. The latter argued that the SAM did not propose any solutions to the problem of landlessness and to support it would involve an alliance with the State. The independent movements characterised the State

as their enemy due to their experience of repression in the struggle for land. However, the proposals of the officialist groups were rejected by a majority which insisted on the continued importance of the land struggle. As a result, CNPA was formed on October 14, 1979 with eleven member organisations.³¹ The social composition was made up of *comuneros*, poor peasants, land claimants and agricultural workers. This explains why the most important issues for CNPA have been the defence of the lands and natural resources of indigenous groups and the implementation of agrarian reform. It has also fought for recognition of rural unions and the defence of indigenous cultures. In more recent years it has given attention to new issues which had been neglected, including the need to improve peasant production through greater access to credit and increased control over marketing. These positions are reflected in the resolutions taken at the first national meeting in Milpa Alta (CNPA, 1980). Although its original slogan of 'To-day we struggle for land, tomorrow for power' suggests that CNPA was not solely limited to sectoral interests, its main concern has always been with achieving solutions to the concrete problem of landlessness. By engaging in such struggles its member organisations necessarily confronted power relations but they did not propose a global strategy for the political transformation of Mexico. In this respect, CNPA maintained autonomy from all political parties, while allowing individual members freedom to affiliate with whomever they wished as long as they did not contradict the principles of CNPA. This position was adopted to avoid incorporation into any single party while promoting a truly grassroots movement with a peasant leadership and a more horizontal and democratic internal structure. It criticised the vertical and hierarchical relationships which existed in traditional confederations such as the CNC due to the lack of participation from the base.

The internal structure of CNPA thus emphasised broad participation from the grassroots and the rotation of leadership positions. Among some of its regional organisations such practices had already been implemented during the 1970s.³² A critique of the role of leadership and the form of internal organisation had been developed by peasants in alliance with outside advisors, including students and teachers. The solution of problems was not seen to be the responsibility of advisors or single leaders, but of the whole community in which all should participate.³³ Starting at this level, the general assemblies of member communities elect representatives to a plenary assembly of their regional organisation, which in turn elects delegates to the national assembly of CNPA. The national assembly elects a permanent commission to reside in Mexico City for one year, where it carries out the assembly's resolutions. Its work is mainly dedicated to pressing the demands of the member organisations with government agencies. It is made up of one representative from each member organisation. The national assembly also elects four other commissions responsible for press and propaganda, peasant women, relations with other organisations and legal advice. The regional organisations similarly divide their work among commissions to deal with the specific issues which most affect them.

The second national meeting of CNPA was called by the UCEZ and held in Santa Fe de la Laguna, Michoacán, in April 1980. This purépecha community had been engaged in a violent struggle in defence of its lands against the encroachment of private cattle ranchers. At this meeting the government's use of repression against CNPA organisations was denounced and it was agreed to give support to the newly formed Frente Nacional Contra la Represión (FNCR), which brought together human rights groups throughout the country. Institutional violence had the effect of mobilising and uniting the independent peasant movement. Following this meeting several of the officialist groups left CNPA while new groups joined (Appendix II). In November 1980 CNPA held its third national meeting in Tlapacoyan, Veracruz at the invitation of the UCI. Once again CNPA rejected the SAM and the new Law of Agricultural Development and agreed to organise a peasant march to Mexico City to protest against government policy and the use of repression. It also agreed to establish closer ties with other movements such as the Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE).

This moment represented the rise of CNPA as an independent and powerful social movement. In May 1981 peasants from at least sixteen states joined teachers in a march to the Zócalo of the capital city to demand the release of imprisoned peasant leaders and the resolution of over three hundred claims for land redistribution. In the months following the march repression became more common. In July and August CNPA and FNCR organised a hunger strike which led to the release of several leaders. Furthermore, the successful mobilisation of May 1981 prompted several organisations to join CNPA prior to its fourth national meeting, called by COCEI and held in Juchitán, Oaxaca in August of that year. Nevertheless, the rapid growth and increasing capacity of CNPA to attract support had met with a repressive response which, by the end of 1981 had forced it into a defensive position. Differences over strategy began to emerge as some organisations pushed for continued national mobilisations while others argued that it was necessary to concentrate more at the regional level and address problems which had been left unresolved due to confrontations with the government.

In the face of these difficulties CNPA still succeeded in organising its second national march in June 1982, although with less support than in the previous year. The following month it held its fifth national meeting, hosted by the community of Venustiano Carranza, Chiapas, at which a more concrete programme was drawn up to include a broader range of demands concerning the rights of peasant women and indigenous peoples. Greater attention was also given to issues of production, credit and marketing. The document also contains a clearly class position in favour of 'social change to destroy exploitation and social oppression'. CNPA also changed its slogan to 'Today we fight for land and also for power', reflecting the politicisation of its economic demands. At this meeting three more groups joined CNPA, taking the number of member organisations to nineteen, representing the participation of ten ethnic groups (Appendix II).

By 1983 CNPA had developed a capacity for mobilisation far greater than its capacity for negotiation. Its actions succeeded in postponing the end of land reform, although at a great cost. However, as it admitted at its sixth national meeting in Mexico City in September 1983, CNPA could not articulate a broad alternative project to the policies of austerity. Instead, the member organisations adopted defensive reactions to the impact of austerity policies such as the reduction in public spending, the withdrawal of subsidies and the decline in guarantee prices. There occurred a 'regionalisation' of the peasant movement as each group tried to survive the crisis through mobilisation and negotiations at the local and regional level, although national marches in the capital continued to be held each April.

The incorporation of the demands of diverse indigenous groups in the CNPA programme also hindered effective national co-ordination. The struggles of indigenous communities for respect of rights to land and natural resources first had to confront local and regional power structures. In Mexico state governments and local level authorities often act in collusion with *caciques* to contain movements with both a class and an ethnic dimension. As a result, the vulnerability of CNPA as a national movement was in large part due to the vulnerability to repression of its regional member organisations. This lesson was learnt by 1985 as CNPA members began to concentrate their efforts on building mass-based movements within their own regions and states. The time-consuming work of national co-ordination became an increasing burden for several organisations which were overstretched financially and in terms of the number of prominent activists they could count on. Consequently, the impact of CNPA has been felt most at the regional level by challenging deep-rooted structures of *caciquismo*. It is also at the regional level that CNPA has achieved its greatest degree of articulation with other social movements, particularly those representing the interests of school teachers, students and the urban poor.³⁴

An example of the problems facing CNPA is the experience of the Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata (OCEZ) of Chiapas, formed in 1982.³⁵ The most important group in the formation of the OCEZ was the tzotzil community of Venustiano Carranza. Located in the fertile Central Valleys, this community lost control of important extensions of communal land to the encroachment of cattle ranches, the formation of new ejidos and, in the early 1970s, the construction of the Angostura hydroelectricity dam. In the struggle to reclaim land from local ranchers four of the community's leaders were assassinated between 1966 and 1971. Tired of using the legal channels, a new generation of leaders who had made contact with radical student groups began to promote a dual strategy of mobilisation with negotiations. The capacity for mobilisation worried the local ranching families and the municipal and state governments moved quickly to repress the opposition. By 1979 the CNC had created a serious split by drawing some support away from the struggle for land in favour of a closer relationship with the government.

The land claimants, organised as the Casa del Pueblo, remained independent and continued to demand the restitution of over 3,000 hectares of communal land held illegally by private ranchers. The struggle continued, now characterised by violent attacks led by the CNC group against the independent movement. As in many land conflicts throughout Mexico, what were originally economic demands were quickly politicised as the SRA made resolution of the problem conditional on the community's affiliation to the CNC. When such conditions were rejected, violence and intimidation were used. In 1980 two members of the Casa del Pueblo were killed, while another three leaders were arrested and imprisoned in April 1981.

Repression of the peasant movement in Venustiano Carranza was a co-ordinated and politically-motivated response of entrenched local interests. The aim was to eliminate the opposition and undermine its regional importance. By 1980 the Casa del Pueblo was a focal point for other discontented peasant groups, providing the nucleus of the Coordinadora Provisional de Chiapas, a state-wide network of land-claimant groups designed to promote joint mobilisations. The confrontation came to a head around the issue of democratic elections of community representatives. The CNC attempted to impose its own candidate for *comisariado de bienes comunales* (president of communal lands) in the elections of May 1980. At such elections the only officials required to attend are usually delegates of the SRA. This meeting, however, was attended by the state governor, the state representative of the SRA, the commander of the 31st Military Zone, local PRI deputies, judicial police, members of the CNC group and people from outside Carranza.

In response, the Casa del Pueblo filed an injunction against the legality of the election and succeeded in frustrating the efforts to impose a CNC candidate. At the same time, it issued an ultimatum to the CNC supporters that they had two months in which to comply with their duty to work communal lands as community members and not as private owners, invoking Article 87 of the Federal Agrarian Reform Law. In the ensuing months violent clashes between the two rival groups became more frequent and in July 1980 a curfew was imposed on the town by state governor Juan Sabines. In the same month the negotiating commission of the Casa del Pueblo was held for over ten hours by municipal authorities and its leader forced to sign a document agreeing to hand over all lands and call new elections. Once again an injunction was successfully filed against the document's legality. Nevertheless, during the second half of 1980 and in the run-up to elections scheduled for May 1981 supporters of the Casa del Pueblo were constantly threatened with arrest orders.

In another attack by the CNC group in March 1981 one of the assailants was killed. This provided a pretext to blame the Casa del Pueblo and eliminate three of its most important activists prior to the May elections by imprisoning them on murder charges. In April, Arturo Albores, Víctorico Martínez and Ciro Coello were arrested and, against their constitutional

rights, were held *incommunicado* for two days during which time they were allegedly beaten and tortured.³⁶ Despite the concerted pressure against it, the Casa del Pueblo succeeded in retaining the post of *comisariado* in the May elections. However, the authorities refused to recognise the election since no representative from the SRA was present. Repression continued throughout 1981 with some forty arrest orders made out against supporters of the independent movement. The release of prisoners was made conditional on several factors, including the acceptance of the division of communal lands, affiliation to the CNC and the withdrawal from Chiapas of Albores and Martínez. Such conditions were clearly unacceptable to the community which continued to press for their unconditional release. A further wave of arrests in February 1982 led to another march and demonstration in the state capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, which was halted by the army. Another prominent activist, Agustín de la Torre, was arrested and imprisoned.

By the end of 1982 the movement in Carranza was not defeated but was certainly on the defensive. Its decision to join CNPA and to promote a state-wide peasant movement (the OCEZ) were taken in response to its vulnerable position within the local power structure. It is likely that such was the case for other regional movements seeking to break out from their isolation and establish links of solidarity and mutual support through CNPA. However, when it became apparent that CNPA was unable to win effective solutions through national co-ordination, groups such as the OCEZ emphasised the need to build broad-based regional movements.

As a result, levels of participation in the CNPA structure declined after 1984. However, within Chiapas, the OCEZ spread to include new groups and demands, including peasants claiming compensation for damages to crop land caused by oil exploration. Between 1982 and 1987 it won the release of its imprisoned leaders and in 1990 the Casa del Pueblo of Venustiano Carranza was finally granted possession of the lands which it had disputed with ranchers. It also promoted politicisation through annual cultural events in various parts of the state.

Nevertheless, as the OCEZ spread so did internal divisions as leaders differed over strategy and relations with the government. The state government of General Absalón Castellanos Domínguez (1982-88) was characterised by the frequent use of repression against almost all forms of political opposition in Chiapas. In 1984 nine members of the Casa del Pueblo were killed in an ambush by supporters of the CNC, while mass demonstrations in July and October 1985 at the palace of state government were violently broken up. Peasant groups such as the Casa del Pueblo were thus sceptical of promises made by the new state governor, Patrocinio González Garrido, and President Salinas de Gortari that their demands would be listened to and resolved through negotiations. When one faction of the OCEZ welcomed this change of approach, another, more radical wing insisted on making no deals which would compromise the movement's autonomy. In effect, this difference

of opinion was due to the possibilities for negotiated solutions in each location. OCEZ leaders in each area followed the path which most suited the interests of each particular group and hence their own position as leaders. In 1988 a deep division occurred as a radical wing confronted a more pragmatic current, leaving the OCEZ internally weakened and unable to present a common front in defence of peasant communities. Regionalisation is accompanied, in the case of the OCEZ, by fragmentation, division and confrontation.

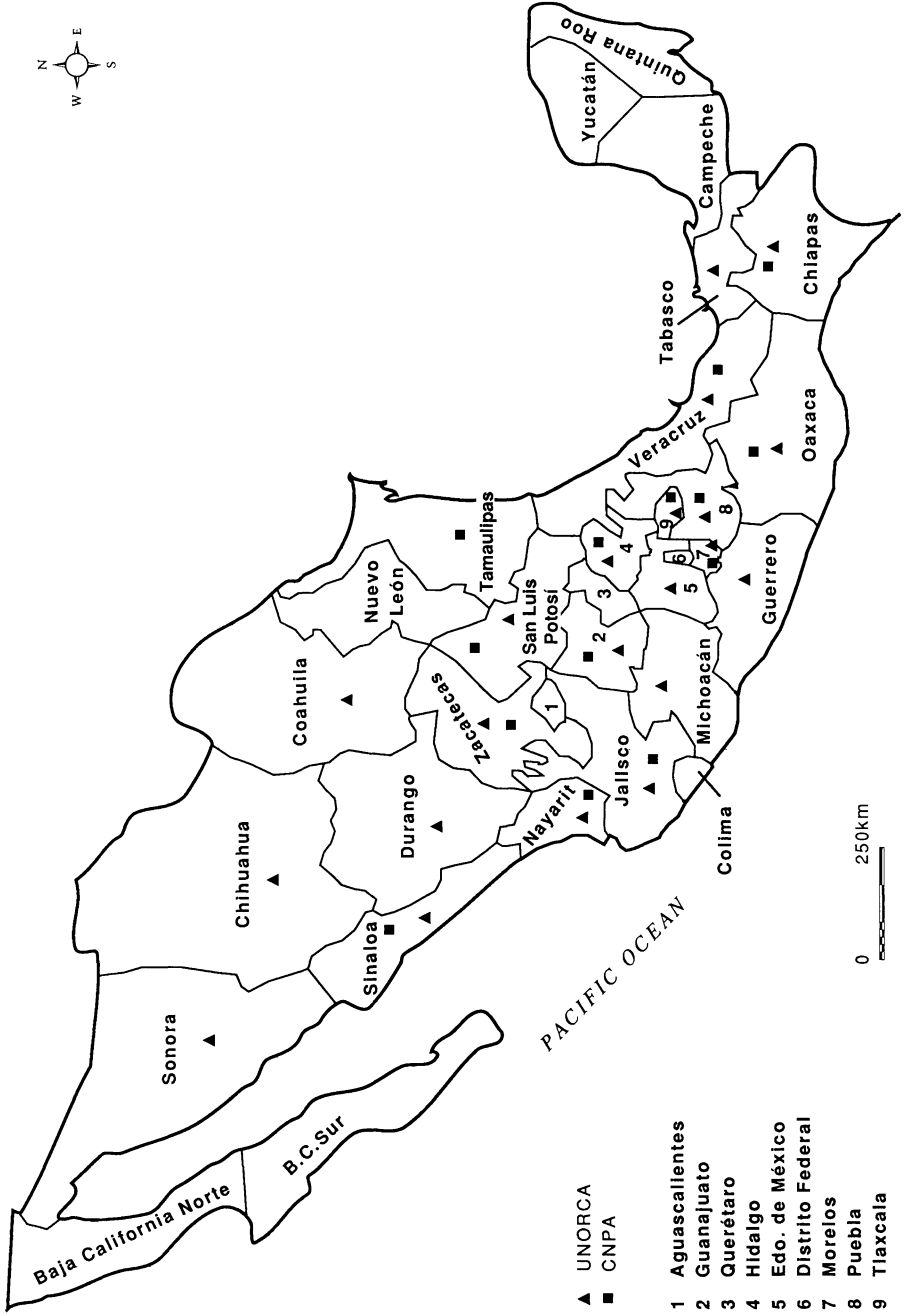
Regionalisation was also a result of local differences concerning alliances with political parties. The trotskyst Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT) was the most important party in CNPA, due to its alliance with the CCRI which co-ordinates the struggle for land in areas of Veracruz, Guerrero, Coahuila and Sonora. In the context of the 1985 federal elections the CCRI was accused of trying to manipulate CNPA in favour of PRT candidates, which provoked a serious split in which the UCEZ, ACR and OIPUH left. Although the latter two rejoined CNPA, the UCEZ remained independent. This was a considerable loss as it was one of the strongest members. The OCEZ was also highly critical of the role played by the PRT but decided to continue within CNPA.

Further divisions followed as CNPA proved incapable of taking on new demands beyond that of land reform. In 1985 and 1986 five organisations left: the CDP de Chihuahua, COCEI, COMA, CCRI and OPA. The latter two joined with the PRT to form the UGOCP, while the COCEI established an alliance with the PSUM. It appears that the increasing importance of electoral contests in Mexican politics passed CNPA by. The dominant current which remained (which included the OCEZ) continued to see elections as simply 'a bourgeois game' and attacked those which supported parties as 'reformist'.³⁷

The greatest strength of CNPA in 1979, its independence from political parties and its clear class position, turned out to be its greatest weakness in a very different political conjuncture, that of the presidential elections of 1988. It had failed to appreciate the importance of the changes which had been occurring in the political system and most of its member organisations refused to mobilise support for the candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. As Hernández argues, the radical and confrontational tone of CNPA was out of step with its real capabilities in the context of economic crisis and repression.³⁸ Discontent within the movement led several groups to concentrate their efforts in their own regions and abandon national co-ordination. Still others looked to new alliances with political parties of the left as the electoral struggles became more important. Similarly, the radicalisation of CNPA has reduced its capacity for negotiations with the State, impeding the resolution of basic demands. Although this was partly due to the use of repression in the countryside, CNPA had not shown the capacity to use the State in the same way as UNORCA had.³⁹ Although in 1989 eighteen organisations from fifteen states continued to participate in CNPA (see map), the levels of

participation varied greatly and the trend towards regionalisation had not been reversed.

At its national meeting in August 1989 several member organisations openly expressed their discontent with the evolution of CNPA. The democratic practices which had distinguished the internal structure of the *coordinadora* had fallen into disuse, participation was not being promoted, analysis of the current national situation was lacking and no strategic plan had been elaborated. The root of the problem was held to be the political immaturity and intolerance of the most sectarian organisations. This critical current calls for the recovery of the positive aspects of CNPA, primarily its earlier democratic form of internal organisation and promotion of broad participation. It also recognises that CNPA is now just one among several peasant movements. After its rapid growth between 1979 and 1982, it entered into decline and has since been overtaken by other organisations, particularly UNORCA, and by the popularity of *neocardenismo*. If CNPA is to survive, therefore, its future lies in co-operation with these new movements. This does not necessarily imply a loss of its identity, but simply a willingness to co-ordinate its own actions with those of other groups. If it takes this path, CNPA will have much to offer in the struggle for social, economic and political change in rural Mexico.



- ▲ UNORCA
- CNPA

- 1 Aguascalientes
- 2 Guanajuato
- 3 Querétaro
- 4 Hidalgo
- 5 Edo. de México
- 6 Distrito Federal
- 7 Morelos
- 8 Puebla
- 9 Tlaxcala

Peasant appropriation of the productive process: the Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas (UNORCA)

Whereas CNPA has maintained a radical stance in defence of its demands for land reform, most organisations have opted for less confrontational tactics and have instead actively sought support from the government for their proposals. This pragmatic strategy has been clearly illustrated by the development of the struggle to control decisions relating to production and marketing. The shift was due to a relative opening towards non-PRI producer organisations on the part of the government after 1979 and a correspondingly conciliatory strategy promoted by Línea Proletaria (LP).

The most important experiences to understand the action of LP in the countryside are those of the Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles Yaqui y Mayo (CECVYM) and the Unión de Uniones Ejidales y Grupos Campesinos Solidarios de Chiapas (UU). Following the land redistribution in the Yaqui and Mayo Valleys in December 1976, pro-government organisations lost their support when they signed an agreement with the Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural (BANRURAL) to pay compensation to the former landowners. The agreement also stipulated that areas of expropriated land which contained buildings or infrastructure should be returned to their former owners. In response the new *ejidatarios* protested by occupying the offices of BANRURAL and forced the bank to reverse its decisions. This initial victory gave rise to the formation of the independent Coalition. In subsequent years the CECVYM fought against corruption, inefficiency and clientelism which characterised BANRURAL and the state-owned crop insurance company, Aseguradora Nacional Agrícola y Ganadera (ANAGSA). In 1978 dependency on ANAGSA was overcome through the establishment of a common fund into which all member ejidos paid. The fund allowed for the creation of departments of technical assistance and seed reproduction, thereby overcoming the problems created by the corruption of government functionaries. BANRURAL threatened to suspend the payment of credit to those who refused to insure their crops with ANAGSA. In its confrontations with BANRURAL the Coalition saw the need to gain greater financial independence through the establishment of its own credit union. By October 1980 the Union of Ejido Credit of the Yaqui and Mayo Valley was established, constituting a further break in the chain of intermediaries. At the same time the Coalition set up its own marketing commission to work in conjunction with the credit union. The objective was to take greater control of decisions relating to production and marketing:

‘the marketing commission was set up with the aim of gaining independence from the control of the marketing committee of BANRURAL with whom we had to deal prior to the formation of the credit union. Now we can make our own decisions regarding the sale of our production, unlike

before when just two or three people who signed the agreements decided for us.’⁴⁰

The objective of the LP activists in the Coalition was to build a viable economic organisation in which the direct producers would have control over the decisions affecting their lives. The Coalition concentrated on each area of economic decision-making, from crop insurance to credit and marketing and instituted a series of projects in technical assistance, training, social welfare and housing. Its success attracted the interest of other producer organisations with similar problems, including the Unión de Uniones of Chiapas (UU).

The UU was formed in September 1980, representing almost 10,000 families from ten municipalities. It began with the work of activists belonging to Política Popular in the mid-1970s who oriented the struggle for land and control of coffee marketing in the Lacandon forest area. After 1978 the marketing issue was seen as the priority as it would not involve confrontation with the government. The shift from radicalism to pragmatism began when the government of López Portillo implemented a policy of repression against land-claimant groups after 1976. The LP considered that the balance of forces was against the continued struggle for land and it was necessary to adopt a more conciliatory position. This strategy could take advantage of a relative opening to producer organisations on the part of federal government. The introduction of new SAM subsidies in 1980-82 allowed organisations such as the UU a greater margin of manoeuvre, although it would tie it closer to State agencies. Its main aims were thus economic, although, according to its advisers, advances in the sphere of production should be accompanied by the emergence of new social actors:

‘we should use the transformation of our production system to overcome paternalism - to discuss different systems of maize and coffee production, to begin to form a new type of producer who is capable of taking initiatives, is responsible, with a better quality in life and work and not conformist, dependent, irresponsible and dominated’.⁴¹

In 1982, the UU won a concession from the National Banking Commission to set up its credit union to operate with 125 million pesos. Each member of its 156 ejidos contributed 2,000 pesos towards the necessary start-up capital of 25 million pesos. The credit union was seen as a solution to the effects of the crisis yet it produced a new set of problems for the UU. Firstly, the speed with which the credit union was set up meant that decision-making was concentrated in the hands of a few advisers with close links to government agencies. Accusations that the union’s democratic form of decision-making had been by-passed led to a serious split in 1983.⁴²

Secondly, with the on-set of the economic crisis in 1982, the LP proposed a change of tactics (*‘cambio de terreno’*) which explains the defensive

pragmatism of the subsequent period. For the UU, confrontation with the government was rejected in favour of negotiations. This stance distanced the UU from the more radical groups affiliated to CNPA, such as the OCEZ of Chiapas. Despite the common problems faced by these organisations, unity was not possible due to their divergent strategies.

The capacity of some peasant movements to use the State was clearly seen in the struggle of migrant colonists to retain control of land in the Lacandon forest area of eastern Chiapas. These communities of chol and tzeltal Indians, organised in 1975 as the Unión de Ejidos 'Quiptic Ta Lecubcel' ('Union is Strength' in tzeltal), had split from the UU in 1983 due to the way in which the credit union was set up.⁴³ Despite gaining assurances in 1981 from the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (SRA) that eviction orders would be withdrawn, local logging interests with close ties to the state governor acted to block any resolution of the problem. The Quiptic responded by seeking support from federal government for its proposals to conserve the Lacandon forest and thus isolate the position of the local authorities. By 1986 there was increasing concern over the ecological destruction of the forest. Some ecologists blamed the slash and burn technique of colonists as the main cause of the damage. The Quiptic, using the press and forums such as the South-eastern Centre for Ecological Research in Chiapas, argued that its members were forced to cultivate more land because they lacked the technical and financial support to increase production on the lands they already had. This support was lacking because the SRA had refused to give definitive titles to the communities in question. In this way, the prevention of ecological crisis was made dependent on security of land tenure. The leaders of the Quiptic took this proposal to the Ministers of Planning and Budgets (SPP), Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE), Manuel Camacho Solís:

'In June 1986 we asked for talks with Salinas and Camacho. Salinas told us that the government was very concerned that the problem of land tenure in the Lacandon forest had still not been resolved and that he was pleased that we had informed him of our situation and that he saw we were willing to resolve the matter. Similarly, Camacho gave a favourable response to our proposals. He immediately set up a commission for the Lacandon forest and organised a meeting for October 1986 with the governor, Castellanos Domínguez, SRA, SARH and the Quiptic. He also published an official letter recognising our land rights. In this way we could overcome the governor's opposition. He had a personal stake in exploiting the forest and he did not like SEDUE promoting our demands. But he could not oppose the conservation of the forest, it is a very important issue now, and unwillingly he gave his support to SEDUE. We have a good relationship with Camacho and this isolates the governor. We knew how to weaken the enemy and now the balance of forces favours us.'⁴⁴

The experiences of regional organisations such as the CECVYM, UU and the Quiptic have been important in the emergence of UNORCA. UNORCA was formed in March 1985 following various meetings to unify regional movements which had not found an adequate response to their demands from the existing official or independent organisations. Significantly, the formation of UNORCA underlined the weakness of CNPA by this time to articulate demands other than that of land reform. This moment would thus mark the rise of UNORCA as a new social movement in the countryside and the accompanying decline of CNPA. It grew from twenty-six member organisations in 1985 to seventy-three by 1989, with a presence in twenty-one states.⁴⁵

In its first bulletin UNORCA states that it is a network of autonomous peasant organisations. Since it is a network, it is not affiliated to any single party but respects the autonomy of each group to support the party it wishes. It thus includes currents which support both the PRI and the PRD. However, its orientation is firmly social and not political. That is, its aim is to struggle for the social and economic development of the ejidos and regions in which it operates. It has drawn on the experience of member organisations by putting the solution of material and economic problems before ideological struggles. Its alliances are similarly limited to the peasant sector. This position is different from the anti-party stance of CNPA, since it does not explicitly criticise party affiliation. However, it is critical of the vertical and centralised structures of traditional peasant confederations which 'belong' to political parties. Like CNPA, it has developed a more horizontal form of organisation. Assemblies elect local representatives to act within commissions of the regional organisations. Regional representatives are also elected to the national co-ordinating committee which in turn elects a permanent commission of four members and a general assembly of representatives from each member group.

The political strategy of UNORCA reflects the *cambio de terreno* which had been promoted by the LP. Rather than confront the State with an intransigent position, UNORCA has emphasised the need to use the State as far as possible to the advantage of its members. As a result, political struggle is used only to address concrete problems:

'If we have to be political then it should be in order to solve our problems with credit, guarantee prices, housing, etc.'⁴⁶

The predominance of economic over political concerns can be interpreted as a response to the effects of the crisis in the countryside. Immediate problems of production and marketing became the priority. At the same time, the withdrawal of the State from its traditional functions meant that new spaces were being left which producer organisations could fill. This helps explain the government's interest in cultivating good relations with the UNORCA-affiliated groups whose proposals began to be seen as necessary for reducing the impact of the crisis. In particular, there has been a

willingness of the federal government to recognise the capacity of the more developed organisations within UNORCA to take greater control of production and marketing.

Nevertheless, tensions with the government were inevitable given the severity of the crisis and the austerity policies which were adopted. As noted above, decapitalisation has been seen in the reduction of the amount of credit and public investment dedicated to agriculture. The worsening terms of exchange for peasant producers was exacerbated by the rising costs for fertilisers, electricity, machinery and improved seeds. The groups most affected have been peasant producers of basic grains who depend on guarantee prices. As a result, between 1982 and 1986 the value in real terms of these prices fell by 43 per cent for maize, 52 per cent for beans, 62 per cent for wheat and 23 per cent for rice.⁴⁷

The issue which led to greatest unrest was the negotiation of guarantee prices for basic grains. Interestingly, UNORCA-affiliated groups brought together independent and official organisations for the first time around this common issue. Since 1983 protests have occurred throughout the country as peasants blockaded roads and occupied warehouses of the state-owned subsidised food company, *Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares* (CONASUPO). In 1986 small and medium producers belonging to the *Alianza Campesina del Noroeste* (ALCANO) organised mass blockades in Chihuahua to prevent the movement of maize from CONASUPO warehouses. The protests spread to the southern part of the state as over twenty thousand peasants of different affiliations joined the *Movimiento Democrático Campesino de Chihuahua* (MDC). They peacefully occupied sixty-nine warehouses and their bargaining position was strengthened by the forthcoming elections for state governor, which reduced the likelihood of a repressive response. As a result, the MDC won a price increase of 15 per cent for Chihuahua maize producers.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, similar protests in other states in 1986 did not have the same effect, due to local political conditions. For example, in Nayarit, a UNORCA-affiliated movement also combined direct action (including the occupation of warehouses and road blockades) with negotiations but, in the absence of the leverage provided by elections, received a smaller increase. In Chiapas, over thirty thousand maize growers led by Germán Jiménez, a former CNC leader in the state, occupied fifty-four CONASUPO warehouses. When the state government refused to meet demands, a contingent blockaded the Pan-American Highway, prompting the army to intervene and remove the protesters. Jiménez and five others were imprisoned as a result, reflecting the personal rivalry with governor Castellanos Domínguez and the traditional use of repression against protest movements in the state (Hernández Aguilar, 1986).

A new wave of peasant protest would emerge in response to the announcement in December 1987 of the Pact of Economic Solidarity (PSE), which was introduced to control spiralling inflation through wage and price freezes. For the agricultural sector the PSE measures included an immediate rise in the cost of necessary inputs as subsidies were withdrawn, while guarantee prices were kept at their 1987 level.⁴⁹

Cárdenas, Salinas and the new agrarian movement

Protests over guarantee prices in 1988 and 1989 became increasingly politicised as the appearance of the Cárdenas movement threatened to pull electoral support away from the PRI. Traditionally the rural vote in Mexico has been controlled by the PRI. High rates of abstentionism, combined with the transporting of voters to polling stations and the hand-out of presents to CNC-loyalists have been common practices. Where opposition candidates have stood the PRI has not hesitated to use fraud to secure its victories. Furthermore, as we have seen with CNPA and UNORCA, independent peasant movements usually abstained from electoral politics, suspicious of the motives of opposition parties.

The elections of July 1988 marked a significant challenge to the PRI in several rural areas, although the official candidate would eventually claim victory on the basis of the rural vote. Victories for the Frente Democrático Nacional (FDN) and the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) were concentrated mainly in the most modern, urban sectors, suggesting a desertion of middle-class voters from the PRI and the support of some important social organisations such as the student and urban popular movements. Nevertheless, the elections were highly contested in several rural states, suggesting a significant shift in political behaviour.

In fact, support for Cárdenas's candidacy took off following his visit in February 1988 to the Laguna region which straddles Coahuila and Durango. Here, due to their discontent with government policies, corruption and declining incomes, *ejidatarios* gave a hero's welcome to Cárdenas, in contrast to the protests seen when Salinas visited the region. These *ejidatarios* had benefited from the massive land redistribution carried out by the father of Cuauhtémoc, Lázaro Cárdenas, in the 1930s. More importantly, thousands of CNC members deserted to the rival Central Campesina Cardenista (CCC) and pledged their support to Cárdenas in the July elections.⁵⁰

Cárdenas was also well received in areas with a long tradition of agrarian struggle, such as parts of Michoacán, the mixteca region of Oaxaca, Morelos and southern Veracruz. Peasants were responding not simply to the mythical figure of Lázaro Cárdenas but to what they perceived as an alternative to the damaging policies of the out-going administration. Cárdenas's programme for the countryside included the demand for the distribution of five million

hectares which are still subject to expropriation and support for the political protection and economic development of the social sector.⁵¹³

Nevertheless, fraud was easier to carry out in the countryside than in the cities where opposition parties had a greater capacity for vigilance. One week after the polls and the infamous break-down of the federal electoral commission's computer system, the government announced that the PRI candidate, Salinas de Gortari, had won 50.36 per cent of the vote, defeating Cárdenas's vote of 31.12 per cent and the PAN's 17.07 per cent. However, the opposition cried fraud and demanded that the government make public all ballots and polling station returns for scrutiny. In fact, only 55 per cent of the 55,000 returns were made public.

The unreliability of the official figures makes any analysis of the peasant vote hazardous. Given this fact, it is surprising that many commentators concluded that, despite the negative impact of the government's policies, it was the peasantry which won the presidency for Salinas. A study of the figures for over 10,000 voting booths in one hundred rural districts suggests that it was in the countryside that the PRI vote was most inflated (López Monjardín, 1990). Similarly, according to calculations made by the Partido Mexicano Socialista (PMS), the vote for Salinas was inflated by 2.2 million while another 1.5 million were subtracted from Cárdenas's tally (Zárate, 1988). Significantly, 1.1 million of Cárdenas's lost vote occurred in states with large rural populations (Veracruz, Guerrero, Michoacán, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Puebla and Coahuila).

In the protests which followed, the major opposition candidates called for an annulment of the elections and were supported by large demonstrations in major cities. However, Salinas succeeded in gaining ratification in September and was inaugurated as President on 1 December. He had won, but without convincing the public of the legitimacy of his victory. However, the Cárdenas camp decided to take up its seats in the Chamber of Deputies rather than insist on a mass campaign of civil disobedience. Nevertheless, protests continued in the countryside as local groups of *cardenistas* did engage in civil disobedience in demand of respect for the vote. Rural discontent was fuelled by the continued reliance on fraud in elections for state legislatures and municipal presidents in the Autumn of 1988 and since July 1989. Long-standing claims against the corruption of municipal authorities found expression in support for the *cardenista* movement. For example, the UNORCA-affiliated Union of Ejidos of the Costa Chica of Guerrero, which supported Cárdenas in July 1988, has participated in protests against electoral fraud in its region. One of the most important demands is for the dismissal of municipal presidents on charges of inexplicable enrichment. A survey of the national press between December 1988 and July 1989 shows that pro-Cárdenas peasant groups continued to denounce electoral fraud and participate in direct action, including the occupation of municipal presidencies, in at least

eleven states: Tabasco, Veracruz, Chiapas, Morelos, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Durango, Puebla and Michoacán.

However, the sudden emergence of elections as the central arena of political struggle was something for which neither CNPA nor UNORCA were fully prepared. The result was that, despite the negative impact of the crisis in the countryside, Salinas could claim victory on the basis of an overwhelming majority in rural districts. Both organisations have thus been challenged by the emergence of *neocardenismo* to which they must now respond. Rather than forming a separate strategy, participation in elections may well form another front of struggle with which peasant movements can advance. Indeed, the limitations of defensive strategies and new linkages with the State may require such a solution.

Due to the lack of credibility surrounding his victory, Salinas acted quickly to neutralise the opposition. In the countryside, two strategies have been deployed. Firstly, the signing of new negotiated agreements, *convenios de concertación*, with independent movements and, secondly, the promotion of a new umbrella organisation known as the Congreso Agrario Permanente (CAP). Within the first three months of 1989 SARH officials rushed to the countryside to sign ten *convenios* with sixty-six organisations in eighteen states. The targeted groups included many of those affiliated to UNORCA. At the same time, Salinas made several speeches in which he emphasised the need to respect the autonomy of peasant organisations and to leave behind the traditional paternalism of the State.

On 6 January 1989, during the ceremony to commemorate Carranza's 1915 agrarian reform law, he said that the time had come to recognise the maturity of the peasant organisations, to let them control the use of credit, fertilisers and inputs. He proposed a new role for the State in which functions and resources would be transferred to the producer organisations, reflecting a demand of UNORCA, while maintaining its responsibilities. These ideas, which appear to have come from Gordillo, were incorporated into official statements of policy, including the National Development Plan (PND) for 1989-94.

Under the sub-heading 'Modernisation of the Countryside', the government affirms its emphasis on negotiated agreements, or *concertación*. It says that there will be a decentralisation of resources and functions to the states; a strengthening of the autonomous character of producers and their organisations; co-operation with state governments and producer organisations to formulate and implement rural development programmes to make more rational use of local and federal resources; and a firm policy to promote efficiency in production. In sum, *concertación* would require the modernisation of relations between State and peasantry in which the authorities would cease to exercise 'any form of anachronistic and corrupt tutelage'. The PND also speaks of associations between private capital and peasants, in an attempt

to attract desperately needed investment, and a thorough decentralisation of resources to state governments and producers.

At the same time, pressure was being applied on the CNC to reform and modernise its structures. At an Extraordinary General Congress of the CNC in May 1989 the chairperson of the PRI, Luis Donaldo Colosio, recognised that old practices no longer worked and were rejected by the rank-and-file and called on the state leaders for proposals to hold democratic elections of agrarian committees. Colosio added that 'democratisation will allow us to transform old *cacicazgos* and imposition into forms of honest, honourable and legitimate co-ordination at the service of the interests of the rural population'.⁵² The members demanded a greater level of participation in all electoral processes through a direct vote, while the CNC leader in Chiapas, Mario Albero Manzano, warned that 'we have lost contact with the peasant base'.⁵³ It is thus significant that one of the most important impacts of independent movements has been to force the CNC to appreciate the need for its own democratisation.

The second strand of Salinas's strategy was the creation of the CAP. Previous governments had attempted without success to unify peasant movements in a common front but had failed, largely because the decision was not taken at the base and the independent organisations were excluded. The government now had to respect the presence of several independent movements if such an alliance was to succeed. In fact, Salinas had to respond to the recent unification of all major independent movements in December 1988 when ten organisations signed the Convenio de Acción Unitaria (CAU). These included groups which can be broadly categorised as left-wing or pro-Cárdenas. The signing of the CAU was based on the following demands:

- (i) increased share of the federal budget for agriculture;
- (ii) fairer guarantee prices;
- (iii) participation of peasant organisations in the decision-making apparatus of State agencies operating in the countryside;
- (iv) reduction in the size of private holdings and the abolition of certificates protecting landowners from expropriation;
- (v) an end to repression and respect for human rights;
- (vi) respect for democratic rights;
- (vii) respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and seasonal workers.

At the prompting of Salinas, the CNC responded by calling for the formation of a broader front, to include itself and other official organisations. In January 1989 a committee was set up to organise the founding congress of the CAP with two representatives of the ten organisations which supported

the new proposal. These included six groups which had signed the CAU agreement (UGOCP, CIOAC, CCC, UNTA, CODUC and UNORCA) and five official organisations (CNC, CCI, CAM, MNCP and UGOCM). Four signatories of the CAU did not join in the CAP, while the Alianza Campesina del Noroeste (ALCANO) joined at a later stage (Table 1).

Table 1

Signatories of the CAU	Members of the CAP
UGOCP	UGOCP
CIOAC	CIOAC
CCC	CCC
UNTA	UNTA
CODUC	CODUC
UNORCA	UNORCA
CNPA	CNC
CNPI	CCI
FDCCh	CAM
MNPA	MNCP
	ALCANO
	UGOCM

Among the organisations which refused to join the CAP, the most important, due to its national presence, was CNPA. CNPA preferred observer status only, arguing for an end to repression against its leaders before participating in such a forum. During the first three months of the Salinas administration over thirty peasants belonging to independent organisations were murdered, reflecting a darker side of *concertación* and a continuation of harassment of opposition social movements.⁵⁴

However, most organisations saw the CAP as an opportunity to present their demands and proposals and influence the shape of agrarian policy. In April 1989 Salinas responded by inviting the CAP to make proposals for the National Plan for Agrarian Co-operation. At the end of May the constituent assembly of the CAP was held at which the positions of the CAU were reiterated, including the reduction in size of private holdings and the demand for full peasant participation in decision-making. It also called for the dissolution of the government's cabinet on agriculture, which was accused of promoting privatisation in the reform sector. As a result, it appeared to take a radical and independent line towards the government and the interests of private landowners. The participation of the UGOCP, CIOAC and UNORCA was therefore important in that they gained support for long-standing demands of the independent organisations.

Nevertheless, there are several problems with the CAP which must be mentioned. The first concerns its position on the broader economic policies of the government. Although the CAP may provide a counter-balance to the CNA, on issues such as debt repayments and macro-economic policy there are profound differences between the member organisations. Thus, an early source of tension for the CAP was the decision of the CNC to sign the extension of the Pact for Stability and Economic Growth (PECE) in June 1989. Other members of the CAP were highly critical of the effects which the PECE has had due to the freezing of prices for agricultural goods and the deterioration of rural wages. Just as in December 1987 when the PSE was introduced, the independent movements claimed that the signing was done without the consent of the majority of peasants, reflecting the continued subservience of the CNC to the government. In July further doubts over the possibilities of the CAP were raised by government plans to abolish guarantee prices and the continued use of repression in the countryside.

At the same time, the leadership of the CCC had formally broken off its support for Cárdenas in favour of closer relations with the Salinas government. The CCC had been mainly organised by the Partido del Frente Cardenista de Reconstrucción Nacional (PFCRN).⁵⁵ In early 1989 the leaders of the PFCRN and CCC, Rafael Aguilar Talamantes and Jorge Amador Amador, entered into negotiations with Salinas and were present at the official celebrations to commemorate the 51st anniversary of the nationalisation of the oil industry. This rapprochement was severely criticised by Cárdenas and the PFCRN refused to participate in the formation of the PRD in May 1989. It remained independent, attacking the PRD leadership as 'opportunists'. Nevertheless, the break with Cárdenas was not entirely popular with the members of the CCC, who denounced the deceitful way in which their national leaders had manipulated the organisation to their own benefit and that of the government. This conflict was most evident in the Laguna and Michoacán, prompting Cárdenas to call for a new peasant confederation to be affiliated to the PRD. As a result, since August 1989 the PRD has been promoting a new umbrella organisation, the Central Campesina Unitaria (CCU), which aims to overcome the weaknesses of the CAU and the ambiguities of the CAP. It received initial support from pro-Cárdenas currents in the CCC, UNORCA, UGOCP, CIOAC, the Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas (CNPI) and some smaller, regional organisations. However, the CAP has proved to be the most attractive of the three initiatives as those groups who have not joined are marginalised in the distribution of resources.

Several observers are thus wary of the neo-corporatist tendencies of the CAP and the extent to which the government is committed to implementing a policy of *concertación*. Such a policy would necessarily lead it into confrontation with the private sector, which is actively calling for privatisation of ejidos. It also contradicts the government's commitments to the World Bank. In February 1988 the SARH signed an agreement with the

World Bank for a US\$300 million loan. The conditions tied to the loan included privatisation of State-owned companies, increases in the cost of credit and withdrawal of subsidies for irrigation and fertilisers. Rendón and Escalante remark that the government's formulation of agrarian policy has thus been conditioned by what is a relatively small amount of money.⁵⁶ Neither this agreement, nor a subsequent World Bank loan of US\$500 million in 1989, contained incentives for most small producers in the decapitalised rain-fed regions. In fact, the groups most likely to benefit are private agro-exporters in the more developed regions. As Robles and Moguel argue, such a policy is likely to deepen social and regional inequalities.⁵⁷

In this sense, Sarmiento argues that the effectiveness of the CAP is dependent not only on its capacity to propose alternative policies, but crucially on the willingness of the government to end repression, release imprisoned peasant leaders, control local *caciques*, provide economic support to ejidos and indigenous communities and show respect for the vote.⁵⁸ This last issue appears to be the most difficult for the government to accept and is another limit to *concertación*. Similarly, García argues that:

'neither *concertación* nor pluralism defines the relations between the State and peasantry to-day. Alongside the speeches in favour of *concertación* is the constant presence of repression, the refusal to solve years-old demands for land and the corporatist goals of the State.'⁵⁹

Gordillo also recognises the difficulties of reforming the State's relations with the peasantry on the basis of greater respect for grassroots autonomy. He places emphasis on the unwillingness of bureaucratic functionaries at the regional and local levels to accept the participation of peasant organisations in decision-making. The reason is clear enough. Functionaries often form an important part of alliances with local power-holders, including landowners and traders.⁶⁰

The implementation of the policy of *concertación* has provoked new problems for peasant organisations. In December 1988 the government announced its decision to help the poorest sectors through the National Solidarity Programme, PRONASOL. However, the new resources are controlled at the local level by municipal presidents and state governors who are often unwilling to channel funds to organisations which remain independent of the PRI. This has been seen in a shift in policy implementation in 1990. In 1989 there were greater opportunities for peasant groups to advance as the government sought to regain its credibility. Such a margin of manoeuvre appears to have been closed again and the relationship with federal government agencies has become much more mediated by state governors. The director of PRONASOL, Carlos Rojas, had created enemies with several governors as he could override their authority and channel funds directly to producer organisations. In response, in 1990 some governors have been blocking the flow of resources to agreed projects when independent groups

are involved.⁶¹ Furthermore, most areas targeted by the government for assistance through PRONASOL are precisely those where the PRI lost in the July 1988 elections: La Laguna, Michoacán and Chalco (State of Mexico). The 1989 budget of three billion pesos translates into just 210,000 pesos a year (US\$70) for the seventeen million Mexicans whom the government recognises as living in extreme poverty. According to opponents, the programme has become more a publicity campaign to help the image of the president and his party than a serious attempt to eradicate poverty.⁶²

Finally, Julio Moguel, a researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, points out that around 80 per cent of the PRONASOL funds have in fact been channelled to PRI-affiliated groups, reflecting a clearly political goal to revitalise the grassroots organisations which support the official party.⁶³ Control at the local level is achieved through 'municipal solidarity councils'. The councils are made up of the municipal president, one representative of the state governor and one municipal delegate. The council decides how resources from PRONASOL will be used and which groups will receive them. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the local opposition to influence decision-making. The relationship is no longer a direct one with the SARH or SPP and local *caciques* make political agreements to exclude the opposition organisations. It seems clear that peasant movements cannot rely on commitments from the federal government, since the crucial point at which resources are controlled is out of their hands, namely municipal and state government. Such a situation calls for greater emphasis on democratisation through electoral struggle, without abandoning the defence of sectoral demands. In this sense, Bartra points out the limits of *concertación* in Mexico's new political environment since July 1988. In a critique of Gordillo's focus on State-peasant relations, Bartra calls for a broader analysis of the relations between peasant organisations and other social movements, including opposition parties. He sees a danger in the reproduction of familiar patterns of negotiation between State agencies and peasant movements since this excludes not only poorer peasants but also the PRD. Thus, for Bartra, negotiations can no longer be the exclusive domain of the State but must allow space for this new party. He therefore warns that:

'In times of crisis and political transition, to depoliticise negotiations with the State and promote important reforms outside the arena of the new opposition, tends, by omission, to legitimise the existing political system and can end up as neo-clientelism; a technocratic and 'modern' corporatism but as oppressive as the previous system.'⁶⁴

Conclusions: identity, strategy and the 'moment of vision'

The prospects for the new agrarian movement in the 1990s are not as favourable as some suggest. Self-managed, democratic production remains a distant goal for many whose reality is one of diminishing control over their lives. Between defensive strategies of resistance and new linkages with the State there is a crucial absence of an alternative project for the countryside. Elements of such a project are clearly still there and grassroots movements fight to keep them alive, but they have not been articulated in a unifying project to contest that of the de la Madrid and Salinas governments. As a result, the historic demands for land and support for the social sector have become unmoored from any central programme for social change.

As the regime severs its traditional ties with the majority of its rural constituents, new possibilities come into play. No doubt the government believes it can handle isolated rebellions and cries of fraud as the full implications of the model are felt. Yet it is playing with fire when the rebels show a capacity to unite. Paradoxically, it seems, after two decades of autonomy from parties, peasant movements in the 1990s may find that their greatest hope lies again with a party, but a new type of party, one that challenges effectively for political power while also carrying out political work at the grassroots. Whether the PRD is this party or can become so will be decisive not only for an alternative vision of rural development but also for the PRD itself and is an issue which requires further research. In the meantime both CNPA and UNORCA face a difficult future.

CNPA organisations have been forced back into their local and regional corners, isolated and weakened by both repression and internal divisions. The demand for land redistribution in 1990 has not disappeared but it has lost its weight in the ideological struggle. In previous decades land reform constituted a central link between State and peasantry. The authorities would attempt to justify negative responses to land petitions on the grounds of the particular case. The right to petition was not questioned. This has changed in the 1980s. The link has been purposefully broken and land reform has been brought to an end. Previous administrations stretching back to Calles in the 1920s triumphantly declared that land reform had reached its limits. They were always thwarted by renewed peasant mobilisation, reminding them that land hunger still existed. So it was for Díaz Ordaz in 1964, López Portillo in 1976 and de la Madrid in 1982. The co-ordinated actions of CNPA in 1979-84 just about kept land reform on the agenda for yet another *sexenio*. However, by 1988 the war had been lost even if some important battles continued, notably those of the OCEZ in Chiapas and the UCEZ in Michoacán. The principal role of the agrarian authorities was no longer to administer land petitions but certificates of non-affectability. Although this may have benefited a small proportion of relatively successful ejidos, the main winners were the promoters of the policy - the private landowners and the CNA. The

divisions in CNPA thus occurred precisely at the moment when it most needed unity to confront the offensive launched by the landowners' associations. Instead, national co-ordination fell away as efforts were re-directed at defending particular land claims in the face of local aggression and official intransigence.

A second link between State and peasantry had been the programmes of rural development. Again, in the 1980s these have been systematically dismantled by the neoliberal policies adopted to meet the economic crisis. The break-up and privatisation of State companies, the withdrawal of subsidies, the reduction in public investment and credit have all severely affected the social sector. In the optimistic language of *concertación*, the State has recognised its bureaucratic inefficiencies and has decided to retreat and hand over its functions to the direct producers. Indebted *ejidatarios* in this way are cut off from BANRURAL which now only deals with the profitable and the viable. For the rest, there is PRONASOL and exhortations to be self-reliant in the ever-receding hope of 'development'. For the more fortunate *ejidatarios* who can produce for the market neoliberalism has almost completely broken with the final strand of State support, the guarantee prices. As noted above, prices for the basic staples fell dramatically in the past decade, despite the efforts of UNORCA. As with CNPA, it appears that macro-economic policy decisions are untouched by popular demands. The most UNORCA could expect was to negotiate at a much lower level the implementation of policies already decided by the economic cabinet and the World Bank.

The most worrying possibility is not that the State replaces old forms of mediation with new ones, to dismantle corporatism while at the same time introducing new institutional channels with which to distribute scarce resources and maintain stability. This is happening at all levels and comes as no great surprise. The real problem is when the new links are much weaker than the old ones, both in terms of providing material improvements (a road, a new school, an irrigation ditch, etc.) and in terms of reproducing a minimal level of acceptance of the political order. It is too early to say how PRONASOL and the *convenios de concertación* compare with the promise of land reform and earlier rural development programmes. There are regions where the new rules will be seen as disempowering and others where they will be seen as liberating. This may accentuate the 'defensive autonomy' versus 'institutional linkage' dichotomy even further as some of the more radicalised groups in the former category look to other, more violent means to achieve their demands, while the more economically viable groups in the second category manage to consolidate their position and use the system to their own advantage. Yet these will represent extremes of political action and, as already suggested, will not provide models for broader social transformation. The test for the system and for peasant leaders will come from the responses of the majority which lies between these two extremes. Stability with change is also, of course, highly dependent on the capacity of the government's

economic strategy to generate enough resources to distribute among the population and, in the case of the rural sector, reverse the process of decapitalisation. Clearly, the implications for peasant organisations of trade liberalisation and the GATT agreements on agriculture require urgent attention. In the meantime no peasant movement or political party can afford the luxury of expecting agricultural workers, small producers and the landless to rally automatically to their call.

In this respect it is worth noting that since 1988 a new array of peasant groups has emerged, stretching our powers of concentration to the limit by extending still further the glossary of acronyms. Yet they are obviously more than acronyms and may provide the basis of an even broader agrarian movement in the 1990s. Some (as in Oaxaca and Chiapas) seek links at the international level with non-governmental agencies such as the Inter-American Foundation or alternative marketing outlets such as Twin Trading. Others, with 1992 in mind, have organised in defence of the rights and cultures of indigenous peoples. Examples are the Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios (FIPI) and the Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo de Tehuantepec (UCIZONI). Other grassroots projects include the formation of networks of producers of particular products. The largest is the Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Cafetaleras (CNO), which brings together twenty regional coffee-producing organisations in eight states. Such movements can help create new spaces for democratic and popular participation and win real material gains. In fact, it is from such concrete experiences as those developed by CNPA, UNORCA and the new organisations that political and ideological alternatives must draw their inspiration. Only in this way can their potential for achieving social and political change be enhanced.

The more sober assessment of the new agrarian movement may be applicable to other popular movements in Mexico and Latin America. Zermeño (1990) argues that Mexican society has been hit by a 'double disorder'. First came the extremely rapid urbanisation and modernisation of the post-1940 period, creating a vast array of social problems and inequalities; then, just as the model was put into new gear by the oil-debt boom, came the economic crisis, smashing emerging social identities into a thousand pieces and derailing the utopia of modernity. In this account, popular movements are the exception to the general scenario of atomisation, self-withdrawal, social disorder and the pulverisation of collective identities. The crisis has been so deep, the neoliberal medicine so austere, that existing forms of intermediation (parties, unions, peasant movements, etc.) have been unable to represent popular demands. Not only are opposition groups affected. In Mexico, the PRI's own confederations proved ineffective and their low esteem was displayed for all in the 1988 elections. Zermeño concludes that the atomisation of society allows for the return of populist-style leaders who can establish a direct appeal with the masses. He suggests

that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas filled this role. Those movements which do survive fight a defensive battle for the sake of 'restricted identities'.

Foweraker (1990) has questioned this approach by emphasising the strategic capacities of popular movements to gain institutional recognition and thereby erode some of the system's clientelistic and corporatist lines of control. Drawing on the experience of the democratic teachers' movement, he focuses on the type of pragmatic strategies seen in UNORCA. Confrontation with the State is avoided at all costs. The aim is to increase the movement's *capacidad de gestión*, that is, its ability to act on the legal and institutional terrain which links State and civil society. Foweraker recognises that sometimes this 'institutionalist' strategy may back-fire and is open to the perennial problem of co-optation. Yet the result is not pre-determined. It is contingent on the way in which struggles alter the balance of forces around specific issues, or, in Gramscian terminology, the 'war of position'.

What is clear from each of these approaches is the need to avoid generalisations about the strategic capacities of popular movements. Some have clearly been more successful than others for reasons which go beyond the movements in question and the scope of this paper. Teachers and urban popular movements have been more successful than peasants and students in their struggle to gain linkage on their own terms. We could disaggregate even further and show how certain regional expressions of these movements have increased their *capacidad de gestión* more than others. Other elements come into play, such as the internal conflicts within the State apparatus and the particular structures which can enable political action (Cook, 1990). Analysis must therefore be sensitive to changes both at the grassroots and in the wider political context. Furthermore it must bring out the relationship between the two processes (Craig, 1990).

Returning to a more concrete level, the challenge of rural democratisation in Mexico raises the possibility of closer ties between the PRD and peasant movements in order to prevent electoral fraud and win rural districts. Such a strategy would be nothing new. In the countryside, control of municipal government has traditionally been linked to land struggles. This was the central axis of the *zapatistas'* struggle for land and power. It was also the goal of Jaramillo and the PAOM in Morelos in the 1950s, the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense (ACG) in the 1960s and the COCEI in the 1980s, to name but a few. Although the post-1968 movements were generally suspicious of parties, the renewed importance of the electoral arena in the 1980s has re-opened the possibility for co-ordinated action. Evidence since 1988 is not too promising, but neither is it conclusive and it remains to be seen how the party-movement relationship is established.

Yet these are still largely strategic issues. What will be more important is the type of party the PRD becomes and the vision, or rather the visions, it articulates. In short, a new type of party has to be popular and not populist, capable of uniting a broad front of popular aspirations in a struggle to

democratise both State and civil society. In the day-to-day struggle to extract resources and gain respect for basic rights the immediate concern is not to lose linkage with those in positions of power. This is understandable. Being cut off can spell the demise of a movement. Yet as all the strategising goes on, the enemies' political and ideological offensive may go unchallenged. This is the situation now faced by CNPA, UNORCA and a host of popular organisations. The vision of an alternative project for rural Mexico and its articulation with a broader project for social transformation has been displaced as the here-and-now becomes their testing ground.

In dealing with these dilemmas Munck suggests that we need to differentiate between two different 'moments' of political activity.⁶⁵ The first is the construction of a collective identity of difference; the second is the moment of collective action (which is full of the ambiguities of strategic decisions taken in relation to the shifting balance of forces). In this way, he returns identity to the same plane as strategy and, in doing so, argues for a different method of measuring the impact of popular movements on the political system than that which looks solely for changes in the legal and institutional terrain. This position does not necessarily lead us back to Evers's romanticised view of flourishing counter-cultures at a distance from the political system.⁶⁶ Instead, it recognises the need for a combination of identity and strategy, of autonomy and realism. If this is so, perhaps we need to think of the necessary conditions for a third 'moment', when the contradictions between the two are dissolved. Only this 'moment of vision' can overcome the limitations of 'institutionalism' and the retreat into sectarianism. For, as David Harvey warns, the apparently positive elements of post-modernism - the emphasis on community and locality, social movements and regional resistances - can lead to regressive politics:

'...it is hard to stop the slide into parochialism, myopia and self-referentiality in the face of the universalizing force of capital circulation. At worst it brings us back to narrow and sectarian politics in which respect for others gets mutilated in the fires of competition between the fragments.'⁶⁷

The current absence of such a vision leaves few options for peasant movements in Mexico. CNPA continues to be divided between ultra-radicals and new pragmatists, with the latter moving closer to the position of UNORCA in defence of the social sector. Yet it remains to be seen how long UNORCA and other members of the CAP can continue negotiating with the government when current policies do not appear to offer adequate solutions to the problems of decapitalisation, unemployment, landlessness and repression. If the new agrarian movement is to have a greater impact it must revive or develop the positive achievements and progressive insights of CNPA and UNORCA - the politicisation of demands, the promotion of broad participation, the stubborn resistance to the loss of land and control over production, the micro-level projects of rural co-operatives and self-management, the democratisation of ejidos and the defence of human rights and

indigenous cultures. Although these advances have been important, particularly at the regional level, their full contribution to political and social change in Mexico has yet to be felt.

NOTES

1. The most comprehensive collection of empirical studies of Mexican popular movements is the volume edited by Foweraker and Craig, 1990.

2. For an analysis of the broad range of post-revolutionary peasant movements in Mexico, see Bartra, 1985. For a more detailed discussion of the period from 1976 to 1984, see Flores Lúa, Paré and Sarmiento, 1988. A good short overview of Mexican peasant movements until 1989 is given in Paré, 1990. I use the term 'peasant' to refer to rural producers whose main demands relate to their condition as economic agents with some degree of control over the land which they work for at least some part of the year. Although such control has been eroded by the expansion of capitalist relations of production, the organisations considered in this paper still aspire to preserve or increase their members' rights to land. I use the term 'new agrarian movement' to refer to the vast array of rural social movements which continue the long struggle for land and support for the social sector of Mexican agriculture. The social sector comprises lands held by members of indigenous communities and ejidos, the name given to lands distributed through the agrarian reform programme. In Mexico all land is invested originally in the nation and the State decides on the form of tenure according to the public interest. Ejidos are thus held in usufruct and cannot be legally sold or rented out, although in practice this is quite common.

3. Rello, 1986, pp. 75-6.

4. This long-term perspective has been used to good effect by several authors. See, for example, Hu-deHart, 1988 and contributions to Stern, 1985.

5. Otero, 1989, p. 30.

6. Canabal, 1987. Cited in López Monjardín, 1990, p. 57.

7. Fox and Gordillo, 1989, p. 159.

8. Carlsen, 1989, p. 46.

9. Hernández, 1990a, p. 21.

10. It should not be assumed that the majority of peasants and rural workers are organised in one movement or another. The long list of acronyms reflects the recent growth of the agrarian movement in Mexico, but most of the countryside is still characterised by a lack of political association, especially, but not solely, among the opposition. As discussed below, CNPA has been particularly unable to speak for groups beyond its own constituencies, and became inward-looking rather than engage in an ideological struggle to win broad support for its demands. Assuming that their case was justified and therefore clear for all, some CNPA organisations have fallen into a sectarian position, alienating the unorganised and unpoliticised majority.

11. García de León, 1989, p. 35.

12. Calva, 1988, p. 39.

13. Escalante and Rendón, 1989, p. 134.

14. Calva, 1988, pp. 11-44.

15. 'La maquinaria agrícola, fuera de las posibilidades de los campesinos', *Excélsior*, 23 February, 1988. Cited by Calva, 1988, p. 25.

16. 'Similares a los de 1936, los niveles de nutrición en el campo', *La Jornada*, 26 October 1988, p. 9.

17. 'Cerca del 50 por ciento del sector rural sufre desnutrición, dice Soberón Acevedo', *La Jornada*, 26 October 1988, p. 25.

18. The source is the SRA Databank file entitled *Concentrado de certificados de inafectabilidad por periodo presidencial*, 1988.

19. Paré, 1987. Cited by López Monjardín, 1990, p. 57.

20. Canabal, 1987. Cited by López Monjardín, 1990, p. 57.

21. Interview, Mexico City, 10 July 1990.

22. Interview, Mexico City, 9 July 1990.

23. The ability of the CNA to shape agricultural policy underlined the weakening position of the pro-government peasant confederations, particularly the CNC. In reality, the CNC leadership had no alternative and was in no position to defend its members. New tensions erupted as regional federations mobilised against the directives of the national executive committee, especially over the issue of guarantee prices for maize, beans, rice and sorghum. Regional movements from Chihuahua to Chiapas emerged

between 1983 and 1986 outside the corporatist control of the CNC leadership. See Equipo Pueblo/Instituto Maya, 1988.

24. Hamilton, 1982, pp. 141-83.

25. In the 1940s communists and pro-Cárdenas leaders were purged from public offices and important trade union posts by a government offensive to subordinate labour to the new conditions of capital accumulation. Rank-and-file discontent continued, but faced increasingly difficult conditions. In 1948-50, the government intervened to impose loyal bosses in the unions of railway workers, miners, teachers and oil workers. These practices were known as *charrazos*, following the first of its kind in the railway workers' union where the imposed leader was known for dressing like a cowboy (*charro* in Spanish).

26. Moguel, 1988b, pp. 141-221.

27. As its new name suggested, CIOAC emphasised not only the land struggle but also the need to organise wage workers in protection of labour rights and improve their conditions. As a result, it has had most success in the north-west and, at the opposite geographical and socio-economic extreme, the coffee plantations of northern Chiapas. CIOAC remained formally independent of the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) although in practice many of its activists were identified with the party and its subsequent development into the Partido Socialista Unificado de México (PSUM) in 1981, the Partido Mexicano Socialista (PMS) in 1987 and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) in 1989.

28. CIOAC, although independent of the PRI and a defender of the social sector, is considered by CNPA and UNORCA to represent a more centralised form of organisation and is criticised for 'using' its supporters for electoral ends. As we shall see, the potentially positive elements of avoiding party affiliation in 1979 were outweighed by the negative elements by 1988. This raises the question of the need for party-movement linkages, which I address in the conclusions.

29. Flores Lúa, et al., 1988, pp. 75-80.

30. The *Plan de Ayala* was the name given to Zapata's revolutionary programme of 1911 for the recuperation of all lands which had been stolen from indigenous communities.

31. These were the following:

- Unión Campesina Independiente (UCI) (Puebla and Veracruz)
- Unión de Comuneros Emiliano Zapata (UCEZ) (Michoacán)
- Comuneros Organizados de Milpa Alta (COMA) (Federal District)
- Unión de Ejidos Independientes de Sinaloa (UEIS) (Sinaloa)

Alianza Campesina Revolucionaria (ACR) (Tamaulipas, Guanajuato)
 Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (CIOAC)
 (national)
 Movimiento Nacional Plan de Ayala (MNPA) (national)
 Consejo Nacional Cardenista (CONACAR) (national)
 Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas (CNPI) (national)
 Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles Yaqui y Mayo (CECVYM)
 (Sonora)
 Organización y Desarrollo de la Comunidad (ODECO) (national)

32. For the case of the UCEZ of Michoacán see Gledhill, 1988 and Zepeda, 1986; for the experience of the Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata (OCEZ) of Chiapas, see Harvey, 1988.

33. Narro, 1990, p. 267.

34. Mejía and Sarmiento, 1987, p. 27; Harvey, 1990b, p. 193.

35. For a discussion of the OCEZ and other peasant movements in Chiapas, see Harvey, 1990a.

36. Amnesty International, 1986, pp. 74-6.

37. Moguel, 1990, p. 11; García, 1990, p. 18; Harvey, 1988.

38. Hernández, 1990b, p. 15.

39. According to a report compiled by the PMS (1987), based on data from Amnesty International, the Mexican press and various peasant organisations, at least 814 peasants were killed in rural violence in Mexico between December 1982 and December 1987. Eighty-seven victims belonged to organisations affiliated to CNPA. Similarly, a report by Amnesty International (1986, p. 15) noted that most of the cases of killings documented in Oaxaca and Chiapas involved members or supporters of opposition peasant organisations.

40. Flores Lúa et al., 1988, p. 147.

41. Unión de Uniones, 1988.

42. Harvey, 1990a, pp. 168-9.

43. These communities faced eviction due to a presidential resolution of 1972 which gave sole land rights to over 600,000 hectares of forest to the Lacandon Indians, the smallest ethnic group in the area. However, the Lacandon leaders had signed agreements with the state-owned Lacandon

Forestry Company (COFALASA), allowing the latter to exploit 35,000 cubic metres of mahogany and cedar per year for a period of ten years. At the same time, the agreement did not take account of the presence of over 3,000 chol and tzeltal migrants who had settled within the newly designated Lacandon community during the previous twenty years and had received titles to ejidos. Although some accepted relocation outside the disputed territory, twenty-six communities organised by the Quiptic decided to stay and fight against eviction. See Unión de Uniones, 1983.

44. Interview, president of administration committee of the Quiptic, Ocosingo, Chiapas, 12 October 1987.

45. Whereas CNPA is concentrated mainly in the southern and central states in regions of high indigenous population, UNORCA-affiliated groups tend to be concentrated in relatively more prosperous regions of the social sector such as Comarca Lagunera in Durango and Coahuila, Sonora, Chihuahua, Nayarit, Guerrero and the Bajío region of Jalisco and Guanajuato. UNORCA has a smaller presence in Sinaloa, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, State of Mexico, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Morelos, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Tabasco and Chiapas (Costa, 1989, pp. 356-9).

46. UNORCA, 1989, p. 1.

47. Equipo Pueblo/Instituto Maya, 1988, p. 51.

48. Fox and Gordillo, 1989, p. 153.

49. As a result of decapitalisation, domestic production of basic grains has fallen rapidly. For example, the National Federation of Maize Producers claims that productivity of this crop has fallen from an average of two tons per hectare in the early 1980s to 1.6 tons in 1989. It adds that the total area under maize cultivation fell by 15.7 per cent between 1978 and 1987 (Robles and Moguel, 1990, p. 6). As a result, Mexico has increased food imports from an annual average of 5.4 million tons per annum in 1977-1982 to an average 6.9 million tons in 1983-1987, almost all of which comes from the United States (Calva, 1988, pp. 13-14). The government's strategy of using comparative advantages by exporting cheap winter vegetables and fruit to the USA has proved vulnerable to the fluctuations of international prices, such that an agricultural trade deficit of US\$126.4 million was registered in 1988 (Calva, 1989, p. 4). Mexico's balance of trade in agricultural goods deteriorated from a surplus of US\$5,793 in 1970-79 to a deficit of US\$937 million in 1980-89. See: 'Deficitaria la Balanza Comercial Agropecuaria en los ochentas', *El Financiero*, 12 January 1990, p. 16.

50. 'Los campesinos esperaron cincuenta años y Cárdenas volvió, reencontrado en su hijo', *Proceso*, no. 589, 15 February 1988, pp. 6-11.

51. Paré (1990, pp. 94-5) cites a speech made by Cárdenas in Morelia in November 1987, in which he made known his programme for the countryside, saying:

‘We stand with the peasants for the distribution of the five million hectares of land still subject to expropriation by law; to eliminate the takeover of land and its products in any form, whether direct or indirect, open or hidden; for the legal and political protection, as well as economic development, of the ejido, the indigenous community, and small private property; against *caciquismo* and corruption in public office and the rural bank; against an agrarian policy like the current one, the most notable achievement of which has been to grant 175,000 exemption certificates (92 per cent of the total extended in 70 years), hurting peasants, small proprietors, and those seeking land, since they give illegitimate protection to illegally concentrated landholdings.

‘We stand with the indigenous peoples for the expedited resolution of all restitution procedures for communal lands; for the constitutional recognition of their traditional forms of government; for the legal recognition of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of the nation, and the consequent reorientation of education and development programmes.’

52. ‘Mecanismos para democratizar la CNC, pide Colosio’, *La Jornada*, 19 May 1989, pp. 40 and 10.

53. ‘En adelante, la alianza con el estado no debe ser subordinación sino concertación’, *La Jornada*, 19 May 1989, pp. 40 and 10.

54. According to the Jesuit Comité de Derechos Humanos ‘Miguel A. Pro’ (1990, p. 51), the number of abuses of human rights in rural Mexico in 1989 represented an increase of 83% on 1988. Similarly, the Interior Ministry’s own commission for human rights recognised that most abuses in 1989 continued to occur in the countryside, although it did not give precise figures on the number of cases recorded. (‘El sector agrario, donde más se violaron los derechos humanos’, *La Jornada*, 5 January 1990, p. 1.) The use of violence against non-PRI organisations has also been associated with the increasing presence of Antorcha Campesina, which many accuse of operating as a para-military band at the service of the government. It formally joined the PRI in November 1988 and has been active against PRD sympathisers in several regions, including Guerrero, Michoacán, Chiapas, Veracruz and Puebla. ‘Antorcha Campesina, brazo paramilitar del PRI’, *El Universal*, 26 January 1990, pp. 6 and 8; ‘Antorcha Campesina ataca Alcozauca’, *Punto*, 8 January, 1990, p. 4.

55. The PFCRN is the old Socialist Workers’ Party (PST), one of several minority parties which had traditionally supported the government while appearing to present a more radical position.

56. Rendón and Escalante, 1989, p. 140.
57. Robles and Moguel, 1990, p. 11.
58. Sarmiento, 1989, pp. 21-23.
59. García, 1989, pp. 19-20.
60. Interview, Mexico City, 10 July 1990.
61. Interviews with Luis Hernández and Emilio García, Mexico City, 9 July 1990.
62. The criticisms aired by the president of the consultative committee of PRONASOL, Carlos Tello, led to his removal and appointment as Mexican ambassador to the Soviet Union. On the government's selling of its 'Solidarity' image, see: 'Solidaridad, oxígeno para el PRI, en el rescate de votos', *Proceso*, no. 718, 6 August 1990, pp. 8-10; and, 'Costó trabajo y dinero, pero la solidaridad tuvo su público', *Proceso*, no. 719, 13 August 1990, pp. 22-26.
63. Interview, Mexico City, 25 June 1990.
64. Bartra, 1989, p. 30.
65. Munck, 1990, p. 37.
66. Evers, 1985.
67. Harvey, D., 1989, p. 351.

Appendix I: Principal peasant movements in Mexico

Organisation	Year formed	Affiliation	Presence
CNC	1938	PRI	national
UGOCM	1949	PPS	BCN, Sin, Son
CCI (faction rejoined PRI in 1979)	1963	MLN	national
CAM (split from CCI)	1970	PRI	Ver, Hid, SLP, Gto
UGOCM-Jacinto López	1973	PRI	Jal, Mich, Oax, Son, Sin, BCN
MNCP (split from CCI)	1974	PRI	Ver, Hid, Pue, Dur, Gto, Oax
CIOAC (split from CCI)	1975	independent but supports PRD	national (strongest in northwest and Chiapas)
UNTA	1978	PST	national
MNPA	1979	independent	national
CNPA	1979	independent	national
UNORCA	1985	independent	national
CODUC	1986	independent	Ver, Gto, Tab
UGOCP	1986	independent but supports PRD	Ver, Pue, Tlax, Son, Gto, Hid, Jal, Gto
CCC	1988	PFCRN	national

Appendix II: Evolution of the CNPA and ethnic and regional composition

Oct 79	Apr 80	Nov 80	Aug 81	Jul 82	Jan 83	Sep 83	Nov 84
UCI (Náhuatl- Puebla, Veracruz)	UCI	UCI	UCI	UCI	UCI	UCI	UCI
COMA (Náhuatl-Federal District)	COMA	COMA	COMA	COMA	COMA	COMA	COMA
UCEZ (Purépechas, mazahuas, otomíes- Michocán)	UCEZ	UCEZ	UCEZ	UCEZ	UCEZ	UCEZ	UCEZ
UEIS (Sinaloa)	UEIS	UEIS	UEIS	UEIS	UEIS	UEIS	UEIS
ACR (Guanajuato, Chiapas, Jalisco, Tamaulipas)	ACR	ACR	ACR	ACR	ACR	ACR	ACR
CIOAC (National)							
MNPA (National)							
CONACAR (National)							
CNPI (National)	CNPI						
CECVYM (Sonora)							
ODECO (National)							
	CCRI (Sonora, Guerrero, Veracruz, Coahila)	CRI	CCRI	CCRI	CCRI	CCRI	CCRI
		COCEI (Zapotecas- Oaxaca)	COCEI	COCEI	COCEI	COCEI	COCEI
		UPM (Náhuatl- Morelos)	UPM	UPM	UPM	UPM	UPM
		UELC (Nayarit)	UELC	UELC			
		CCH (Huastecos- San Luis Potosí)	CCH	CCH	CCH	CCH	
		FPZ (Zacatecas)	FPZ	FPZ	FPZ	FPZ	FPZ
		CDP (Chihuahua)	CDP	CDP	CDP	CDP	
		OCHV (Veracruz)	OCHV	OCHV	OCHV	OCHV	
		OIPUH (Náhuatl, otomíes- Hidalgo, Veracruz, San Luis Potosí)	OIPUH	OIPUH	OIPUH	OIPUH	
		BCCH (Tzotziles, tzeltales- Chiapas)	BCCH				
		OCEZ (Tzotziles, tzeltales- Chiapas)	OCEZ	OCEZ	OCEZ	OCEZ	
		OPA (Otomíes- Tlaxcala, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Puebla)	OPA	OPA	OPA	OPA	OPA
		MULT (Triquis- Oaxaca)	MULT	MULT	MULT	MULT	MULT
		MLR (Amuzgos- Guerrero)	MLR	MLR	MLR	MLR	
		ORCO (Jalisco, Nayarit)	ORCO	ORCO	ORCO	ORCO	ORCO
		OPL (Chatinos- Oaxaca)	OPL	OPL	OPL	OPL	OPL
		FCI (Chinantecos- Oaxaca)	FCI	FCI	FCI	FCI	FCI
		UTC (Guerrero, Oaxaca)	UTC	UTC	UTC	UTC	UTC

Glossary of acronyms

ACG	Asociación Cívica Guerrerense
ACR	Alianza Campesina Revolucionaria
ALCANO	Alianza Campesina del Noroeste
ANAGSA	Aseguradora Nacional Agrícola y Ganadera
BANRURAL	Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural
BCCH	Bloque Campesino de Chiapas
CAM	Confederación Agrarista Mexicana
CAP	Congreso Agrario Permanente
CAU	Convenio de Acción Unitaria
CCC	Central Campesina Cardenista
CCH	Comité Coordinador Huasteco
CCI	Central Campesina Independiente
CCRI	Coordinadora Campesina Revolucionaria Independiente
CCU	Central Campesina Unitaria
CDP	Comité de Defensa Popular (Chihuahua)
CECVYM	Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles Yaqui y Mayo
CIOAC	Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos
CNA	Consejo Nacional Agropecuario
CNC	Confederación Nacional Campesina
CNOC	Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Cafetaleras
CNPA	Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala
CNPI	Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas
CNPI	Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas
CNTE	Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación
COCEI	Coalición Obrera Campesina Estudiantil del Istmo
CODUC	Comisión Organizadora de la Unidad Campesina
COMA	Comuneros Organizados de Milpa Alta
CONACAR	Consejo Nacional Cardenista
CONASUPO	Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares
FCI	Frente Campesino Independiente de Oaxaca
FDCCh	Frente Democrático Campesino de Chihuahua
FDN	Frente Democrático Nacional
FIPI	Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios
FNCR	Frente Nacional Contra la Represión
FPZ	Frente Popular de Zacatecas
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
LM	Línea de Masas
LP	Línea Proletaria
MDC	Movimiento Democrático Campesino de Chihuahua
MLN	Movimiento de Liberación Nacional
MLR	Movimiento de Lucha Revolucionaria
MNCP	Movimiento Nacional de los Cuatrocientos Pueblos
MNPA	Movimiento Nacional Plan de Ayala
MULT	Movimiento de Unificación y Lucha Triqui
OCEZ	Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata

OCIHV	Organización Campesina Independiente de la Huasteca Veracruzana
ODECO	Organización y Desarrollo de la Comunidad
OIPUH	Organización Independiente de Pueblos Unidos de las Huastecas
OPA	Organización de Pueblos del Altiplano
OPL	Organización para la Liberación
ORCO	Organización Regional Campesina de Occidente
PAN	Partido de Acción Nacional
PAOM	Partido Agrario Obrero Morolense
PCM	Partido Comunista Mexicano
PECE	Pacto para la estabilidad y el crecimiento económico
PFCRN	Partido del Frente Cardenista de Reconstrucción Nacional
PMS	Partido Mexicano Socialista
PND	Plan Nacional de Desarrollo
PP	Política Popular
PP	Partido Popular
PPS	Partido Popular Socialista
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
PRONASOL	Programa Nacional de Solidaridad
PRT	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores
PSE	Pacto de Solidaridad Económica
PST	Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores
PSUM	Partido Socialista Unificado de México
SAM	Sistema Alimentario Mexicano
SARH	Secretaría de Agricultura y Recursos Hidráulicos
SEDUE	Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología
SPP	Secretaría de Programación y Presupuesto
SRA	Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria
UCEZ	Unión de Comuneros Emiliano Zapata
UCI	Unión Campesina Independiente
UCIZONI	Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo
UEEZ	Unión de Ejidos Emiliano Zapata
UEIS	Unión de Ejidos Independientes de Sinaloa
UELC	Unión de Ejidos Lázaro Cárdenas
UGOCM	Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México
UGOCP	Unión General Obrera Campesina Popular
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens' Fund
UNORCA	Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas
UNTA	Unión Nacional de Trabajadores Agrícolas
UPM	Unión de Pueblos de Morelos
UTC	Unión de Trabajadores del Campo
UU	Unión de Uniones Ejidales y Grupos Campesinos Solidarios de Chiapas

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