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THE ROLE OF THE FEDERACION CAMPESINA IN THE
VENEZUELAN AGRARIAN REFORM PROCESS

by

John Duncan Powell

This paper is a partial summary of the author's Ph.D. thesis.

All views, interpretations, recommendations, and conclusions are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supporting or cooperating organizations.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Certain points of view, or biases, necessarily entered into some of the interpretations and judgments made in this study. In order to forewarn the reader, and assist in his appraisal of my work, I will make my viewpoints explicit.

Basically, I hold an instrumentalist conception of the state. Harold Lasswell defined politics quite nicely for me in his Politics: Who gets What, When, How. The state is the primary organization for extracting resources from society for collective purposes, and for their authoritative allocation among the populace. Accordingly, access to and influence in the political process are prerequisites for satisfactory political participation. The more widely distributed are access and influence, the more democratic the polity.

Specifically, the Venezuelan campesino has made one of those mass breakthroughs into the polity which have been characteristic of the democratization of most western societies.* As a political scientist, this accomplishment merits my attention more than questions of economic efficiency or the development of campesino cooperatives.

On the critical question of paternalism in the distribution of agrarian reform benefits, I believe this to be a predictable and natural characteristic of the initial phases of mass participation. I also believe that this will change as second generation campesino participants, with more education, experience, and higher expectations, work their way into, and their will upon, the local leadership structure. The Federación Campesina, with all of its faults, is a rough union democracy, organized so as to permit a shift in the locus of power and control toward the mass base as it becomes ready and able to demand it. While such a development is problematic, I am optimistic about it.

*See Val R. Lorwin, "Working Class Politics in Western Europe," The American Historical Review, Vol. LXIII, No. 2, pp. 338-351.

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERACION CÁMPESINA IN THE VENEZUELAN AGRARIAN REFORM PROCESS

by

John Duncan Powell*

In three of the four Latin American cases of massive land reforms-- Mexico, Bolivia, and Cuba--a common characteristic has been the association of the reform with a single, revolutionary political party. During the 1945-48 phase of the Venezuelan land reform, a similar situation occurred. An important evolution in the Venezuelan picture, however, made it a variant from this pattern. Initially associated with a single party, Acción Democrática (AD), the Venezuelan agrarian reform since 1958 has been supported by (and incorporated into the organizational programs of) the two other largest democratic parties in Venezuela: the Social Christian Party, known as COPEI, and the Unión Republicana Democrática (URD). The basic differences between the politics of the single-party-dominant governments of Mexico, Bolivia, and Cuba, and the multiparty governments of Venezuela have had important effects on the agrarian reform and on the role which organized peasants play in this process.

The early phase of the Venezuelan agrarian reform shared another characteristic with the Mexican and Bolivian cases: an initial mini-fundization of the land in response to pressures from the peasantry. Again, however, the Venezuelan reform, resumed after the fall of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship in 1958, has evolved into a program which goes far beyond land fragmentation. The program under the 1960 Agrarian Reform Law in Venezuela has been characterized, not by mini-fundization, but by land grants to peasants on the order of five to ten hectares; in addition, a wide range of occupational and social services has been provided to land recipients, in a deliberate effort to achieve an integral reform.

Finally, the Venezuela agrarian reform of 1945-48 shared a third characteristic with the Mexican, Bolivian, and Cuban agrarian reforms. The peasant union movements in each case either were initially dominated by the revolutionary political parties with which the reform was associated, or came to be so in time. As a corollary of the evolution of Venezuela into a multiparty democratic state, the peasant union movement has also evolved into a multipartisan organizational form.

This chapter concerns the development of the peasant union movement, the Federación Campesina de Venezuela (FCV), into its present form, and the role which it plays in the agrarian reform process. The organic growth of the peasant union movement will be traced back to its origins, and its role in the first, radical period of land reform in Venezuela from 1945 to 1948 will be described. An explanation of the evolution of the Federación Campesina since 1958 will be followed by a detailed examination of its role in the present agrarian reform. Throughout the presentation, the relevance of politics to the instigation and carrying out of reform will be an important and constant consideration.

*A former research assistant with the Land Tenure Center, John Powell is now a Research Associate at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, and the Director of Research of the Center for Rural Development, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The Origins of the Peasant Union Movement

The traditional agricultural economy of Venezuela, dominated by export-oriented sugar, coffee, and cacao operations, reached a development apex about 1920.¹ The arrestment of the growth of this sector began in 1915 with the imposition of the blockade on Germany, the primary customer for Venezuelan high-grade coffee. Following the War, the financial disasters which befell Germany precluded the re-establishment of this profitable marketing relationship. Marketing losses were generalized during the Great Depression, and the entire export-oriented agricultural sector experienced a gradual decline from which it has never really recovered.

During this same period, beginning about 1921, the development of the petroleum industry in Venezuela began to attract capital and entrepreneurial talents away from traditional investment areas, such as agriculture, and into the orbit of this wealth-generating new enterprise. Combined with marketing losses, the decreased attractiveness of the agricultural sector as an investment resulted in a cycle of mutually-reinforcing disincentives--a drying up of credit sources, and an increasing difficulty in selling products. By the mid-1930's, Venezuelan agriculture was in serious trouble.

Venezuelan campesinos were adversely affected by the economic problems of the agricultural sector, primarily through their dependence on seasonal employment on commercial farm operations, but also through land tenure arrangements such as renting, sharecropping, or subsistence squatting.² The credit and marketing squeeze on commercial farmers was passed on to the campesino in the form of longer working days, decreased salaries, higher rental fees or sharecrop-ratios, and evictions from subsistence plots. It has been estimated that, during the 1930's, only 40 percent of the campesino population (already at the bare subsistence level) did not experience a worsening in its income and living conditions due to a combination of all of the above economic disturbances.

The landowning class in the rural areas enjoyed access to and influence in the councils of government during this period, by virtue of their social and economic status, and the closed, tradition-bound nature of the Gómez governments (1908-1935). Such entree was exploited by the commercial farm sector beginning in the 1920's to initiate and shape government programs and institutions to relieve their perceived problem-conditions. Thus mortgage-credit and export subsidy, and support programs came into existence and were utilized by the landowners. The campesino class, on the other hand, had no such access to, or influence in, the policy-making arenas of government. Lacking the organized and well-financed access of the landowners, the campesinos responded to their deteriorating situation by "direct problem-solving activities"--scattered land invasions; conflicts with landowners over wages, rents, sharecropping terms, and other land tenure arrangements; occasionally

violent uprisings of entire village communities; and, increasingly, a massive exodus from the harsh rural environment into the urban centers of the country.³

Governmental policy responses during the 1930's reflected the differential political organization and influence of the two rural classes. The programmatic response to the expressed needs of the commercial sector was positive--establishment of the Banco Agrícola y Pecuaria (BAP), setting of preferential exchange rates (the "Coffee Dollar" and the "Cacao Dollar"), and export subsidizations. In spite of these responses, however, the commercial farm situation continued to stagnate. Governmental policy responses to the needs of the campesino sector were negative--rather than seeking to alleviate the problem-conditions which generated the campesino agitation and unrest, Venezuelan governments sought to suppress the symptoms. The power of the state was directed toward quelling agitation by force if necessary, protecting landowners in land tenure disputes, and by returning at least some urban migrants to the rural areas through an extraordinary "Emergency Colonization Plan."⁴

The great irony of these policy responses of the 1930's in Venezuela lies in the fact that the consequences which flowed from them established many of the conditions necessary for a radical agrarian reform--which occurred finally in 1945-48. The export subsidy and exchange rate programs permitted the commercial sector to continue operating in a marginal position; but as landowners increasingly turned to the mortgage-credit program of the Agricultural Bank (BAP), they increased the burden of interest to a point where costs outweighed gains.⁵ The long-range consequence of the program, therefore, was a cycle of farm foreclosures and the passing into the hands of the state of an estimated 400,000 hectares of potentially productive lands by 1945.⁶ On the other hand, the consequence of the government's suppression of campesino attempts to alleviate their increasingly miserable conditions of life was not to stifle their search. In fact, the effects were felt in the opposite direction, as local leaders saw more clearly the need for mass organization and coordination. The potential among the campesino masses for being organized into a militant syndicalism was greatly enhanced by the governments of Gómez (1908-1935), López Contreras (1936-40), and Medina Angarita (1941-45).

Beginning in 1936, this potential was tapped by the leaders of Venezuela's newly-emerging political parties. A near-perfect marriage of functional capabilities and needs was thereby initiated: campesino masses and the local leaders sought political representation and the organizational skills necessary to weld themselves into an effective form of collective action; the leaders of the new political parties sought a base of organized, massive electoral support; in each other, the partners found their needs nicely met. The organizational result of the marriage was the peasant union movement--its goal, agrarian reform.

Foremost among the political groups which mushroomed in Venezuela following the death of Gómez in December 1935, was the Movimiento de Organización Venezolano (ORVE), a front movement of political and labor organizations.⁷ Rómulo Betancourt, Secretary General of ORVE, became Secretary of Organization when it was converted into a full-fledged political party, Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN) in October 1936. All of the early Venezuelan political party leaders, but especially Betancourt, were greatly concerned over the "masses without intellectual chiefs, and the intellectual chiefs without masses."⁸ Their chosen instrument to fuse the two together was the union movement. Betancourt was especially mindful of the need for peasant organizations in the fight for an agrarian reform. As a result, political organizers under the personal direction of Betancourt began in 1936 to pull together a nation-wide cadre of leaders, who in turn had the task of recruiting local peasant leaders and helping them to form peasant unions under the terms of the new Labor Code.

These professional organizers travelled into the rural areas surrounding the villages, towns, and cities of the chief agricultural states (Carabobo, Aragua, Miranda, Sucre, Zulia), locating indigenous community leaders and learning the detailed situation of the local campesinos and their problems. Leaders were approached with an offer to help organize the local campesinos into an effective form of collective action by forming a peasant union. Local pressures were to be magnified by the association of the local with a nation-wide peasant union movement, and by its partnership with the rapidly growing, reform-oriented political movement of Rómulo Betancourt.⁹

Initially, the political program of the PDN was to secure representation for the urban and rural working classes on municipal councils and in the state legislative assemblies--and eventually build from this base a national political party capable of winning elections and bringing a sweeping socio-economic reform program to Venezuela. The response of local peasant leaders and their followers to this strategy was marked somewhat by an almost religious fervor. The "Doctrine of the Redemption" (for past wrongs to the campesino masses by the ruling classes), as enunciated by Betancourt and others, struck a responsive chord in the campesino subculture.¹⁰ The specific goals of the local organizations were access to adequate land to earn a decent living; improvements in wages and land tenure arrangements with landowners; and a transformation of the rural environment by the reduction of disease, the building of sewage and water supply systems, sanitary housing, schools, roads, and other community services. In a phrase, what was sought was a revolution in socio-economic status. By 1945, the appeal of the organizational program had reached an estimated 100,000 peasants belonging to some 500 peasant union nuclei.*

*The legally recognized union movement, of course, was far smaller. This estimate is based on the rapidity of growth after 1945, which indicates a pre-existing organizational (de facto) base.

The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution

The political movement led by Rómulo Betancourt, legalized in September 1941 as Acción Democrática (AD), had by 1945 become the country's largest popular political party. In numbers, its strength lay in the rural areas, yet in organization and in the leadership of the labor union movement it was the single most powerful urban mass movement as well. As an organization, it was ready and capable of winning a national election and taking over the task of governing the nation, but the Venezuelan political system was not yet structured on a basis which made popular elections the determinant of political power.

As it has become institutionalized under the long reign of General Gómez, the Venezuelan political system was a restricted-access elite affair with decision-making powers resting largely in the circle of Army friends and fellow Andeans of the dictator. Most of the figures closest to the seat of governmental power came from Tachira, Gómez' native state, and access was gained to this circle by means of family relationships, personal acquaintances, and the appropriate socio-economic credentials. Upon the death of the dictator in 1935, General Eleazar López Contreras, his Army Chief of Staff, became President, prolonging the rule of the Tachirenses Circle. López' hand-picked successor, General Isaias Medina Angerita, also from Tachira, continued the traditional form of rule, yet responded to the modernizing pressures building up within Venezuelan society to a degree which alarmed López Contreras and the conservative wing of the government party, the Partido Democrático Venezolano (PDV). The outlook for the 1945 presidential succession, therefore, was for the matter to be decided, not by open elections, but by the internal factional struggle which was developing within the PDV.

Acción Democrática had been strenuously advocating changes in the political system which would turn its mass following into an effective power base--the direct election of the President (rather than by Congress); the granting of universal suffrage to all citizens over 18 years of age; and the holding of free elections of all public officials using secret ballots. These changes would diminish the influence of the Tachirenses Circle in the Presidency, since AD had an overwhelming preponderance of potential voters, (who were circumscribed by electoral requirements concerning sex, age, literacy, and property tax criteria). However, it appeared that the tentative moves toward the opening up of the electoral system which Medina had made, such as permitting political parties to function legally after 1941, and the granting of female suffrage in 1945, were to be ended, if not reversed; by the Lopez Contreras faction if it had its way in the 1945 elections. The leaders of AD, who had been preparing an electoral juggernaut since 1936, saw their chance (of ever being able to utilize it) diminish. The struggle over the successor to Medina in 1945 drove home to the AD leaders that they controlled a highly organized, massive political asset--and yet, under the rules of the game then in force, this asset was almost inapplicable. When the

leaders of an impending military coup approached the AD leadership in mid-1945 with a tentative offer to incorporate Acción Democrática into a planned reformist government, the opportunity was seized upon as the only way to convert AD's potential political asset--their mass following--into an operational one.¹¹

The coup d'etat of October 18, 1945 was carried out by a group of younger Army officers known as the Unión Patriótica Militar. The same frustrations which were faced by the AD leaders in seeking to utilize their assets for political leadership had been faced by these men: their professional qualifications and training were inapplicable to the advancement of their careers--instead, the continued dominance of the clique of old Army generals from Tachira perpetuated the system of promotion by virtue of family and social connections. The young officers and the young political leaders sought the same thing in their respective spheres: access to decision-making power by virtue of instrumental-based, and not ascriptive-based, credentials. With the establishment of the Junta Revolucionaria del Gobierno in 1945, the officers of the Unión Patriótica Militar turned to the reform and modernization of the Venezuelan military establishment, leaving the reform and modernization of the rest of society in the hands of the AD members of the Junta, under the leadership of Rómulo Betancourt.¹²

On the formal, legal level of activity, the AD-dominated government changed the basic rules of the political game almost completely from 1945 to 1948. By Decree No. 216 of March 15, 1946, the Junta established new electoral regulations, enfranchising all Venezuelans over 18 years of age, and setting up the election of a constituent assembly. On October 27, this election was held, and masses of newly enfranchised rural voters chose representatives, with AD winning over 30 percent of the popular vote. The Assembly proceeded to adopt a new constitution, guaranteeing the universal suffrage set up earlier by decree, making the election of the President and the National Congress direct, and making all public elections by secret ballot. Under the new constitution, proclaimed July 5, 1947, the first free and direct election of a president in Venezuelan history occurred on December 13, 1947. The AD candidate, Don Rómulo Gallegos, was sent to the Miraflores with a solid congressional majority--83 of 128 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and 38 of 46 Senate seats. The others were divided among two newly organized political parties which had come into being since the October coup: a Christian Democratic party known as COPEI, under the leadership of the young lawyer and student leader, Rafael Caldera, and the Unión Republicana Democrática (URD), under the vigorous leadership of Jovito Villalba, who, along with Betancourt and Raúl Leóni, was a member of the politically famous 'Generation of '28' student leaders at the Central University. By 1948, the political system had been basically restructured--the direct election of the national government by all adult Venezuelans had been made the chosen legal procedure, replacing the highly indirect traditional system (under which a severely prescribed electorate voted for State Assemblies, which elected congressional representatives, who in turn elected the President).

This new procedure met with such universal acceptance that even the dictator, Pérez Jiménez, made no attempt to change it--he merely corrupted it and falsified the popular vote to his purposes. Electoral organization--the ability to send masses of voters to the polling places on election day--had been firmly established as the key determinant in the distribution of legitimate political power in Venezuela. Acción Democrática, as the first entry in the field of mass organizations, was thereby placed in a dominant position in Venezuelan politics.

By the fall of 1948, the AD Congress passed a Law of Agrarian Reform and sent it to President Gallegos for his signature. The AD government was to fall victim to a military coup less than a month later, but the coup was not in time to stop the agrarian reform. For, ironically, by the time of the passage of the de jure reform statute, in the words of a Mexican agricultural economist, "the agrarian reform had already taken place."¹³ This little known, but extremely important, radical phase of de facto agrarian reform must be examined to understand the later evolution of the program.

The Revolution in Land and Rural Politics 1945-1948

Immediately following the coup of October 18, the Junta Revolucionaria held a Convention of Regional Executives (Governors of States and Administrators of Territories) at which the policy guidelines of the new government were laid down. The land policies established at this convention indicate the AD leaders of the Junta had concrete reforms in mind, and the determination to initiate them without delay. Important policy plans included:¹⁴

1. A nation-wide guarantee against arbitrary eviction of land tenants;
2. A federal cadastral survey to settle land conflicts among campesino occupants and those claiming ownership rights;
3. Mediation by Regional Executives to insure equitable land rental and other tenure arrangements among landowners and land users;
4. Immediate studies to indicate how best to use government lands such as the ex-Gómez holdings, and the foreclosed farms held by the Agricultural Bank (BAP), in order to place them in the hands of campesino users;
5. The leasing of private lands, or their purchase, by regional governments, for the purpose of subleasing them to campesinos, in areas where there were not adequate public lands available.

In order to consolidate these policies, the Junta created a Comisión de Tierras within the Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y

Colonización (ITIC) in December 1945. Into the Comisión de Tierras began to flow requests from individual small farm entrepreneurs and peasant unions for land.¹⁵ The stipulated social policies of the Junta (as well as politics) dictated that group petitions be given priority. The Commission was empowered to lease the lands from the government entity which held its title, or from private owners, if leasing terms could be agreed upon. The ITIC technicians then prepared farm management plans for the acreage, and drew up a subleasing contract with the members of the Junta Directiva of the peasant union submitting the petition for land. The contract bound the union leaders to organize the peasant members in the planned cultivation of the leased property. By April 1946, ITIC had leased 12,991 hectares in Carabobo, Aragua, and Miranda states to 30 peasant unions with a total membership of 5,700 campesinos.

The initial phase of the program was characterized by a response to the most intense campesino pressures by fragmenting immediately available land, producing minifundia. The directors of the program, although aware of the uneconomic aspects of minifundia, characterized this initial response as a "transitory solution to critical problems."¹⁶ Among the reasons given as determinate in the land distributions were:

1. The state of agitation for land which existed in the countryside;
2. Shortages of time, personnel, and the machinery to effect an adequate parcelization scheme;
3. The shortage of disposable land in the areas of the greatest population, and therefore the impracticality, if not the impossibility, of distributing sufficiently large parcels to a few campesinos while leaving their neighbors without any.

Two points should be stressed. First, as in the Bolivian agrarian reform, the earliest phases of the Venezuelan reform reflected the intensity of political pressures by a minifundization of the land, regardless of the existence of rational preferences among certain key policy-makers.* Second, the pressures in the Venezuelan case, judging from the initial distribution patterns, were greatest in the most productive agricultural states. The key factor here seems to be that in Aragua, Carabobo, and Miranda, the ratio of land tenure arrangements such as leasing and sharecropping was quite high in relation, for instance, to squatting (combined with wage labor on commercial farms); and that, therefore, the potential for conflict between landowners and tenants (and between large commercial seekers of land for expansion and small campesino producers) was quite high. It was in the same three states that the most intense organizational efforts at peasant

*These political pressures resulted from heightened awareness of unsatisfactory conditions of life among the campesinos. A primary leadership function had been to stimulate this awareness.

syndicalization were made beginning in 1936, and in which the most vigorous response by local campesino leaders emerged. Thus, it seems that the greatest campesino pressures were manifested in areas in which the campesinos were relatively advanced, had experienced at least limited farm management activities and concerns, and were located favorably in terms of economic infrastructure and marketing systems. The sociological concept of "relative deprivation" seems applicable to this situation--the campesinos who had perceived the possibilities of incorporation into the larger economic system were those who reacted the most vigorously when the general economic situation in agriculture deteriorated and they were pushed into submarginal positions.¹⁷ The most backward and least experienced campesinos generated less intense pressures for land in the early phases of the radical agrarian reform because they had less of a grasp of what they were missing, and had correspondingly lower expectations and aspirations.

The second development in the 1945-1948 agrarian reform in Venezuela occurred on May 8, 1946, with the issuance of Decree No. 282, which funded ITIC with Bs 10 million, specifically earmarked for agricultural credits to "associations of campesinos"--that is, peasant syndicates--for their use in farming the lands leased for them by the Comisión de Tierras. The credits were distributed locally by committees consisting of a representative from ITIC, a credit technician, and an officer from the peasant syndicate, who had the responsibility of verifying the performance of the campesino applicant in the tasks assigned by the technical farm plan drawn up by ITIC. In slightly less than one year, the ITIC credit program distributed almost Bs 8 million of its Bs 10 million fund.

The initial phase of the Venezuelan agrarian reform had tremendously enhanced the leadership status and prestige of local peasant union leaders by March 1947. Recruited initially as social and opinion leaders in their rural communities, these elite peasants, by virtue of their linkages with the Revolutionary Government, had been granted powerful instrumental attributes. As leaders in forming the syndicates, they could choose the campesinos whom they desired as members; as syndicate leaders, they could petition ITIC for land grants for the membership to farm; if land were granted, they were in a position to influence the administration of the accompanying credits. The overall impact of these newly acquired attributes can be inferred from the summary figures in Table 1.

As powerful as these instrumental attributes were in enhancing the status, prestige, and political influence of local peasant union leaders in rural Venezuela, local landlords in many important areas remained an obstacle to the amount of benefits which the local leaders could bring to their unions. In the areas of the highest population pressures, government lands for distribution to campesinos were limited; by March 1947, what available lands there were had already been subleased, and the results were minifundia (an average of 2.3 hectares per campesino).

Table 1. Summary of ITIC Land and Credit Operations, January 1946-March 1947

Item	Quantity
Number of hectares leased and in production	54,437
Number of peasant unions participating	210
Number of peasant members of participating unions	23,493
Average credits granted per campesino	Bs 332
Expected recuperation rates of credits granted	70%
Credit recuperation rate as of March 1947	30%

Source: The ITIC File (see footnote 15).

Local landlords in these high pressure areas often refused to come to terms with ITIC negotiators to lease lands for peasant union use or demanded such exorbitant returns that it was economically ruinous. The final development in the radical phase of the Venezuelan agrarian reform was to break the power of the rural landowning class by destroying its primary attribute--the absolute control of vast land and water resources--and its corollary: power to grant or deny access to those resources.

The key step in the breaking of the power of the rural landlords was taken on March 4, 1947. The AD-controlled Asamblea Nacional Constituyente passed a Decreto de Arrendamiento de Predios Rústicos--Decree Concerning the Rental of Rural Properties--which was signed by the President of the Junta, Rómulo Betancourt, on March 6, 1947.¹⁸ This decree revolutionized the control and use of private and public property in rural Venezuela. It created a number of Agrarian Commissions in each state and territory, empowered to administer the leasing of farmlands to peasants. Article 5 required all owners of private lands not being actively farmed to lease them to government agencies or directly to peasant syndicates. Article 11 placed all public lands--national, state, and municipal--under the control of the pertinent commission to facilitate its leasing to peasant users. In one bold stroke, the power to deny access to land and water resources was stripped from landlords, unless they could satisfy the Commissions that they were actively farming the land. Landlords could not set exorbitant rentals--the Commission set the price which it considered a fair return--and the Commissions had the power to fine landlords up to Bs 500 for noncompliance with their findings.

The Agrarian Commissions were comprised of one representative from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAC), one member appointed by the Regional Executive, one member of the appropriate local governmental body, such as the Consejo Municipal or the Junta Comunal, one representative of the local landlords, and one representative of the local peasant syndicate. The local landlords, thus, were granted formal representation on these powerful bodies which so affected their interests--but the procedures for selecting the specific representative were controlled by the local governmental authorities. In addition, the Commission could meet and vote with only a majority of the members--three out of the five--present. In such a case, if political necessities required, the Commission could bypass both the landlord representative and the technical representative from the Ministry (MAC). Appeal from the findings and injunctions of the Commission could be made, of course, to a three-man board of appeal, consisting of one representative of MAC, one representative of the Regional Executive, and one representative of the peasant union movement.

The Decreto de Arrendamiento de Predios Rústicos of the Revolutionary Government provided the formal basis for overturning the power of the local landlord and placing the local peasant union leader in a position of almost unassailable strength. The shift in social, economic, and political power which this decree cemented was revolutionary. All of the implicit powers which the landowner had formerly held over the campesino masses were not explicitly in the hands of campesino union leaders--and these powers, augmented by the linkages of the local union with the Revolutionary Government, were employed to grant access to land and credits to the campesinos on a large scale. By November 1948, it is estimated that some 125,000 hectares of land had been leased to approximately 73,000 peasant union members.¹⁹ While the land distribution ratio amounted to minifundia, in Venezuela--as in Bolivia--peasant satisfactions were relative to their former situations. Such satisfactions, and the corresponding political credits which accrued to Acción Democrática, were therefore of a high order, and probably heightened for the peasantry by witnessing the shift in local power from the landlords to their own class leaders.

As the revolution in land and politics unfolded from 1945 to 1948, the peasant union movement emerged from its period of gestation, begun in 1936, and developed into a full-blown, nation-wide trade union organization. Under the changed policies in the Ministry of Labor, legal recognition and registration of peasant union locals accelerated rapidly (see Table 2 for the growth of the peasant unions).

In November 1947, when the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers was formed, the Federación Campesina de Venezuela achieved national organizational form. Of the 15 state federations of labor and the seven occupational federations which combined to form the new Confederation, only one was not dominated by AD labor leaders--the communist-led Clothing and Textile Federation. The Federación Campesina was led by Ramón Quijada, a long-time ORVE-PDM-AD peasant organizer from Sucre state.

Table 2. Legally Recognized Peasant Syndicates and Membership 1936-1948

Year	Number of Peasant Unions Legally Operating	Members
1936	3	482
1937	11	1,429
1938	18	2,182
1939	25	2,858
1940	25	2,858
1941	26	2,925
1942	35	3,649
1943	53	4,432
1944	71	5,823
1945	77	6,279
1946	312	19,113
1947	433	36,193
1948 ^a	515	43,302

^aAs of November 24, 1948, the date of the coup d'etat.

Source: Compiled from the various issues of the Memoria of the Ministerio de Trabajo y Comunicaciones (1937-1945) and the Ministerio de Trabajo (1946-1948).

Note: The data prior to 1946 underestimate the actual number of peasant organizations and members, since they represent only the unions which the Labor Inspectors chose to register. In some years, more registrations were cancelled than new ones granted. All of the membership data underestimate, since the number of founding members, once recorded, was not changed to account for growth in the syndicate's membership.

In fine, the 1945-48 period in Venezuelan political history was revolutionary. During this period, the basic political system was converted from a closed, ascriptive-based system of management by a restricted elite to a more open, instrumental-based system of competition among organized electoral machines. As the best organized of these electoral machines, Acción Democrática was completely dominant in the political system during this period, although other major political parties began to develop similar organizational capabilities beginning in 1946. The electoral system was formally converted from the indirect election of the Congress and President by a restricted electorate, and replaced by the direct election technique, with secret balloting by all Venezuelans over 18 years of age, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, literacy, or property and tax qualifications. The basic structure of this system was not overturned during the 10 years of dictatorship which followed, although its functioning was seriously limited and manipulated by governmental powers. The conversion of the basic system from a closed to an open one must be counted as a permanent legacy of the 1945-48 regime--its legitimacy was sealed by the acceptance of the Venezuelan people, and extended through time by their continued expectation to participate in the governmental process.

At the same time that the 1945-1948 regime was directing the forces which revolutionized the political system, another revolution was taking place in the rural areas. The power position of the rural landlord was being challenged by a power competitor, the local peasant union leader. By 1948, the union leader had displaced the landlord as the primary figure in the control of, and influence over, the social, economic, and political forces which affected the lives and fortunes of the campesino masses. This was especially true in the most important central states, which were the mainstay of the agricultural economy of the nation. By 1948, there were an estimated 2,500 local peasant union officers in Venezuela, affiliated with a nation-wide trade union organization, the Federación Campesina de Venezuela. The peasant union movement was fused with the dominant political party, Acción Democrática. By virtue of this linkage, the peasantry had already achieved a large degree of de facto agrarian reform by the time of the passage of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1948. The nature of the de facto reform in the rural areas, and the displacement of the landlord by the peasant union leader, conditioned the rural society of Venezuela in durable, if not permanent, fashion. The utility of the powerful linkages between local campesino union leaders and the national government, in altering and improving rural living conditions, was an experience deeply etched into the peasant subculture.²⁰ This experience and these linkages were abruptly broken by the military coup d'etat of November 24, 1948.

The Counterrevolution, 1948-1958

Prior to the election of President Gallegos under the Constitution of 1947, the military members of the Junta Revolucionaria fully participated in the task of governing the nation, although much of their energies were absorbed in professionalizing the armed forces. Following the election of Gallegos, he and the other AD political leaders sought autonomy in the political and administrative tasks of reform which were embodied in their program. Not only did this development violate the expectations of the military men (who dominated the Unión Patriótica Militar) to continue exercising influence in, if not control of, policy decisions, but it pointed up the differences in the goals of the civilians and military. The goal which originally motivated the military men to step into the political realm in 1945 was a limited one--the internal reform of the military establishment. The goals of the AD participants in the coup, however, were open-ended--being the establishment of a system of government based on free political party competition--intended to be responsive to the changing needs of the mass electorate. The perception of this divergence of goals by the military men was sharpened by the rapid pace and occasional overzealousness with which the AD regime was pushing a broad range of socio-economic reforms. The interests which were adversely affected by these reforms found a sympathetic response in key military circles. The result was the coup d'etat of November.²¹

The military men justified the coup by publically criticizing Acción Democrática for attempting to build up "a state within a state" by its alliance with, and encouragement of, a partisan labor movement.²² The Junta Militar took vigorous steps to dismantle this budding sub-state. The AD party was almost immediately declared illegal and disbanded--its property confiscated, its leaders jailed and exiled. Especially after 1951 when Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez emerged as an undisputed military dictator, AD partisans and leaders were the target of government suppression, assassination, imprisonment, and exile by the political police (Seguridad Nacional--SN).²³

By Decree No. 56 of February 25, 1949, the entire Confederation of Venezuelan Workers, which included, of course, the Federación Campesina, was declared illegal and ordered to be disbanded. The dictatorship suppressed the labor movement by the arrest of its leaders and the restrictions which it placed on union organizations and activities.²⁴

In the matter of agrarian reform, the Junta brought the de facto agrarian reform process to an immediate halt, freezing ITIC and Banco Agrícola campesino credit funds, and ending the land distribution program. ITIC was administratively dissolved in June 1949, completing the formal dismantlement of the agrarian reform machinery. Even as the formal steps to terminate the agrarian reform process were being carried out, the process of undoing what had been accomplished during the 1945-48 period was begun.

Upon the overthrow of the AD government, the contractual leases of private farmlands under the powers of the Decreto de Arrendamiento de Predios Rústicos were null and void for practical purposes. The leasing arrangements undertaken in these contracts were gradually liquidated, and in some cases--especially if the landowners had been forced into the lease--the liquidations were not so gradual. In any case, campesinos farming such private lands were gradually evicted as control reverted to private ownership. Even more serious for the campesinos who had been reached by agrarian reform benefits from 1945 to 1948, the public lands which had been leased to peasant syndicates and their members (about 70 percent of all agrarian reform projects were on government properties) began to pass to private hands following the overthrow of the AD government. This was especially the case on potentially valuable properties which had been former Agricultural Bank holdings (through defaults in the credit-mortgage program), and the former Gómez lands which had been active agricultural operations. In at least one case, ex-Gómez holdings were successfully recaptured from the government by members of his family, and in other cases, were sold to private commercial interests. Foreclosed farms held by BAP and other government agencies, some of which had been on the market under the AD government for 25-30 percent down, were sold by the dictatorship by dropping the down payment requirements to as low as 10-15 percent.²⁵ Once again, as in the days of Juan Vicente Gómez, it became fashionable for government officials to acquire the status of weekend hacendados.

The peasants who were subsequently evicted or otherwise dislodged from the lands formerly granted them under the agrarian reform resisted forcibly in some cases, were tricked into voluntarily moving to new locations in others, or quietly vacated their former plots by order of the new private owner, the police, or the Army.²⁶ The dimensions of this setback for the peasantry can be grasped by comparing the number of peasants on lands leased to them by the government in November, 1948--an estimated 73,000 on 125,000 hectares--with the number on government colonies and small settlements at the time of the fall of the dictatorship--3,759 farmers on 34,452 hectares.

The Pérez Jiménez dictatorship was able to terminate, and even temporarily reverse, the radical agrarian reform program begun by the AD regime, but it was unable to erase the earlier experience from the subculture of the peasantry and its syndicate leaders. The leaders of the peasant union movement, predominantly affiliated with Acción Democrática, shared the suppression experience by the party and the overall labor movement. They also shared in the clandestine resistance to the dictator which eventuated in his overthrow in January 1953. With the demise of Pérez Jiménez, the full force of the peasantry's drive for land and socio-economic emancipation was unleashed once again, compounded now by the experience of reversal and perceived injustices suffered under the dictatorship. The events in the Venezuelan agrarian reform process from 1958 through 1962 must be understood as an accommodation to, and attempt to constructively channel where possible, that flood-tide

for change. The governmental response to the situation was in some contrast to the 1945-1948 response--for the political system which emerged from the decade of suppression was no longer single-party dominated, but a vigorous multiparty system.

The Evolution of the Democratic State and the Peasant Union Movement from a Single-party to a Multiparty Organizational Form

By the end of the decade of military dictatorship, the Venezuelan party system had gone underground. Acción Democrática was immediately forced into a fight for organizational survival, and elaborated a security and resistance apparatus of considerable importance. The Unión Republicana Democrática, after an agonizing decision to participate in, rather than boycott, the 1952 elections, experienced the humiliation of witnessing their candidate--who was receiving the subrosa support of AD--roll up a tremendous lead in the initial voting returns, only to have the government close down the electoral commissions counting the vote, seize the ballots, and disclose to the nation after some delay that Marcos Pérez Jiménez had been given an overwhelming endorsement by the people.²⁷ Shortly thereafter, the URD reaction prompted the government to declare its existence and operations illegal. The Social Christians--COPEI--eventually came to an open break with the government prior to the electoral farce of 1957.

The collaboration of political leaders in the clandestine resistance to Pérez Jiménez during the ten years of suppression gradually built up a network of personal and functional interrelationships, especially among the younger leaders. The interaction and cooperation of opposing political groups, so necessary to the security and survival of all, had the effect of de-emphasizing insubstantial partisan differences, and emphasizing commonly held goals--the elimination of military rule, and a return to conditions of free and open electoral competition for political power. The consequence of these factors was a gradual coalescence of political resistance forces in Venezuela, culminating in the formation of a multipartisan Junta Patriótica in 1957, and an adjunct Comité Sindical Nacional.²⁸ The coalition tendency was manifested in the exile political organizations during the turbulent period leading up to the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez. In New York City, a meeting was held among Rómulo Betancourt (AD), Jovito Villalba (URD), and Rafael Caldera (COPEI) in January 1958. The representatives of the three major democratic parties signed the Punto Fijo--an inter-party pact which pledged the signatories to responsible conduct in the anticipated political campaign, and to the formation of a coalition government which included representatives of all political parties (except the Communist Party) by the successful candidate for President.

Following the flight of Pérez Jiménez on January 23, 1958, and the assumption of temporary power by a civil-military Junta, the political exiles returned to Venezuela and proceeded with the tasks of reorganizing

party machinery for the December 1958 elections of a President and a new Congress. The Punto Fijo agreements were honored during and after the election, as President-elect Betancourt proceeded to form a multi-partisan Cabinet, with AD, COPEI, and URD the major participants.

Before and during the early Betancourt administration, interparty collaboration resulted in the passage of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1960 and its subsequent annual budgetary support. Despite the fact that URD withdrew from the governing coalition in November 1960 over a policy conflict as to how to deal with Fidel Castro, it continued to support agrarian reform through its congressional representatives. Similarly, when President-elect Leoni failed to come to an agreement with COPEI leaders over their continued participation in a coalition administration early in 1964, and COPEI went into a posture of moderate opposition to the government, it continued to give discriminating support to the government's budgetary requests for the agencies dealing with the agrarian reform. It could be argued, therefore, that agrarian reform, as a national political issue, has become multipartisan.

Paralleling these developments was the resurrection of the Venezuelan labor movement in multipartisan form. This tendency was formalized by the formation of interparty reorganization committees in the states under the Comité Sindical (formed during the clandestinity). The main thrust of these committees was directed toward the regrouping of local unions, their registration in the Ministry of Labor, and the reformation of the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers. The peasant union movement was the first major Federation to reform, holding its First Campesino Congress in June 1959 and re-electing Ramón Quijada President, with a 13-man, multipartisan Executive Committee.

The rapidity with which the peasant union movement revived, and its tremendous increase in numbers following the dictatorship, may be accounted for by several factors:

1. The rank-and-file of urban labor had shared somewhat in the petroleum-induced boom of the mid-50s, while the peasantry had experienced the reversal of gains made during the 1945-1948 period, and a partial return to earlier social and economic relationships with the rural landowning class;
2. The resulting militancy among the peasants had been nurtured by the peasant union leaders, who, as a group, were a less available target for government harassment than their urban counterparts, and therefore shouldered much of the burden of clandestine organizational activities;
3. The combination of these two factors made interpartisan collaboration especially strong in the rural areas, and following the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, there developed a tolerant competitive ferment in the organization of new syndicates by the leaders of all political factions;

Table 3. The Growth of The Peasant Union Movement, 1948-1965

Year	Number of Peasant Unions	Peasant Members
1948	515	43,302
1949	19	n.a.
1950	24	n.a.
1951	32	n.a.
1952	54	n.a.
1953	64	n.a.
1954	70	306
1955	72	918
1956	79	1,176
1957	n.a.	n.a.
1958	130	4,586
1959	782	39,090
1960	1,813	91,599
1961	2,197	109,698
1962	2,632	130,677
1963	2,936	145,111
1964	3,156	156,193
1965	3,476	171,299

Source: Compiled from the various issues of the Memoria of the Ministry of Labor.

Note: Membership figures are underestimates, since they represent the cumulative number of founding members of syndicates, and do not account for subsequent membership growth. As of 1966, FCV leaders claimed a total membership of nearly one million--my own estimate, supported by several indicators, is that there are currently some 500,000 campesino members of the Federación Campesina.

4. The decision of COPEI to decisively enter the field of rural organization. This organizational drive was so successful that by 1964 COPEI accounted for approximately one-third of the campesinos organized into the FCV.

Thus the transformation of the party system in Venezuela from a single-party dominant to a multi-party one was paralleled in the organization of, and influence in, the peasant union movement. While AD still was foremost in the movement, due to its early start (and the identification of the agrarian reform issue with Rómulo Betancourt and the first AD regime, 1945-1948), other party leaders, especially from COPEI, shared important positions of power in the national organization, and dominated several state organizations. As of mid-1966, approximately 65 percent of the 3,500 or so local unions were controlled by AD leaders, 30 percent by COPEI leaders, and 5 percent by URD leaders.²⁹

Organization of the Federación Campesina

The Federación Campesina de Venezuela (FCV), as its name implies, is a national organization of state and local peasant union groups. It is run by an eleven member National Executive Committee, which is elected approximately every three years upon the convocation of a Campesino Congress, which is, according to the statutes, the supreme organ of the peasant union movement.³⁰ The Executive Committee, with its adjunct Disciplinary Tribunal, is the inner circle of power and decision-making for the movement. As of mid-1966, the Committee offices were divided between AD and COPEI, with URD having two Committee votes without portfolio. It is expected that upon the convocation of the Third Campesino Congress, scheduled for the fall of 1966, a new distribution of Committee positions will be worked out on the basis of the number of local and state FCV organizations dominated by, or affiliated (through its leadership) with, the three political parties.

On the State, or Seccional, level, the distribution of power among the leaders affiliated with the various parties, in the form of positions on the State Executive Committee, is decided in a manner parallel to the national level--in State Conventions, which are held prior to the convocation of a Campesino Congress. Local union leaders attend these Conventions, with a number of votes determined by the membership of the local, to elect the State Executive Committee, to assess the accomplishments of the state movement and its problems, and to formulate an agenda for action and a programmatic mandate for the new Committee.

Local unions are organized along lines similar to the state and national Executive Committees, with a Junta Directiva of officers technically required by the Labor Code to stand for election annually. In practice, when annual elections are held, the same group of leaders often rotate positions on the Junta. Local union leaders who are not

negligent in their duties, and represent their campesino constituents with a reasonable degree of success, can normally expect, if they so desire, re-election to their (nonpaying) positions.

The 3,500 local unions affiliated with the Federación Campesina range in size according to our sample data, from just under 40 members (the legal minimum), to several hundred members--7 percent have less than 40; 31 percent from 40 to 99 campesino members; 27 percent from 100 to 199 members; and 25 percent 200 or more members. In this last category of large unions, the phenomenon of size is closely related to the political affiliation of the union leadership--the leaders of 88 percent of the locals with more than 200 members are affiliated with Acción Democrática.³¹

The 550,000 campesino members of the Federación Campesina represent a mixed variety of land tenure types and occupational interests. Members living on an agrarian reform settlement and those living in the surrounding area may belong to the same union--and while the most prevalent land tenure type was reported by union leaders to be a combination squatter (conuquero) and seasonal wage laborer, other types included sharecroppers, tenants, and even small owners. Thus, the occupational (or tenure status-derived) interests which are represented by the FCV are varied and complex.

The campesino members of the FCV share certain important characteristics which provide the basic impulse for the program of action of the peasant union movement--unsanitary environment and resultant gastric diseases; inadequate housing; lack of community facilities such as medical centers, sewage systems, sanitary water supplies and schools, and low income levels. In combination with these factors one finds attitudes of pessimism and unhappiness among campesino samples included in recent survey research programs conducted in Venezuela.³²

General Characteristics of the Federación Campesina Leadership

The leaders of the FCV are on the average younger than the campesino members whom they represent--but there are important differences in the leadership related to their party affiliation--with the age of the AD leadership reflecting the longer history of their party in organizing the peasantry³³ (see Table 4).

While younger than the typical peasant member of the FCV (41 years), the leaders are clearly superior to the FCV campesino membership in a critical characteristic--education. And among the various leadership strata, differences in education are directly related to the position which the leader holds in the hierarchy of the FCV (see Table 5).

Part of the educational differences between the leaders of the FCV may be related to family background and life residential patterns. These factors are important in themselves for the differing attitudes

Table 4. Party Affiliation Related to the Age of FCV Leaders

Party Affiliation of FCV Leaders	Average Age of FCV Leaders at Various Levels		
	Local	State	National
All leaders (total)	40	37	38
AD	42	44	46
COPEI	38	33	33
URD	28	25	35

Table 5. Comparative Education of Campesinos and FCV Leaders (Percent)

Level of Education	Campesino Groups ^a			FCV Leaders		
	Asen- tado	Non- asen- tado	Laborers	Local	State	National
No school	66.5	52.5	50.0	30.5	4.3	--
Some primary	23.6	32.1	31.3	45.7	17.4	4.1
Complete primary	1.4	3.6	4.0	18.6	52.1	61.5
Some secondary (or more)	0.5	0.7	2.0	4.2	21.7	32.8
N =	(191)	(183)	(166)	(118)	(23)	(24)

^aSource: CONVEN--Asentado data from sample of peasants living on an agrarian reform settlement, or asentamiento; non-asentado data from a dependent sample of peasants living near--in the same county--the same agrarian reform settlements.

Note: In this and subsequent Tables in which the columns do not total 100.0, the reason is due to "don't know" or other responses not specified in the Table.

and value orientations into which the family members are socialized. In addition, they may be related to the availability of educational opportunities (the existence of nearby schools), economic considerations (based on income differences), the perceived value of education, and other factors which condition the educational trajectory of any individual. (For comparisons based on father's-occupation factor, see Table 6.)

Table 6. Father's Occupation: Comparison of Local, State, and National Leaders of the FCV

Father's Occupation	Percent Reporting		
	Local	State	National
Campesino	83.9	56.5	45.8
Small business	5.9	21.7	8.3
Laborer	3.4	8.7	20.8
Professional	1.7	--	16.6
Large landowner	--	4.3	4.1
Other	--	4.3	4.1
N =	(118)	(23)	(24)

(See Note for Table 5.)

Emerging from somewhat different family backgrounds than local union leaders, and having attained higher educational levels, the state and national leadership of the FCV tended to be drawn into the labor movement through a number of its branches. The local union leaders, however, were almost entirely drawn into the overall labor movement through the peasant union sector. (See Table 7.)

Finally, the combination of background factors reported above entails a differential perception of calling, or occupation, on the part of the various leadership strata. While 86.4 percent of the local FCV leadership sample reported "farming" as their primary occupation, and 84.7 percent reported their major source of income was similarly derived, state and national FCV leaders identified themselves either as labor or party leaders, and in rare cases as a member of an established profession (for which they had been educated) such as school teacher or veterinarian. The fact that state and national leaders earn their income from labor movement or political party-related employment emphasizes

Table 7. Comparative Labor Movement Background of Local, State, and National Leaders of the FCV

Branch of Labor Movement First Joined	Percent Reporting		
	Local	State	National
Agriculture	89.8	43.4	59.0
Transportation	1.7	13.0	4.5
Construction	2.5	26.0	--
Industrial	--	13.0	22.7
Petroleum	1.7	4.2	9.0
Other	1.7	--	4.5
N =	(118)	(23)	(24)

(See Note for Table 5.)

this difference--as does the fact that the national leaders have been active in the labor movement for an average of 16 years, the state leaders for 14 years, and the local leaders slightly less than eight years. In short, the local leaders of the peasant union movement are themselves campesinos, and retain this identity in their role of union leader, while state and national FCV leaders are professional labor and political activists.³⁴

Peasant union leaders at all hierarchical levels seem to be products of the same recruitment process--or perhaps it is more accurate to say, of the same chronological sequence of associations. This sequence of secondary-group associations forms a pattern suggesting that individual leaders are recruited into political party activities, and that the party then functions as a mechanism to recruit them into labor union activities, and still later in time, into the peasant union movement (see Table 8).

Linkages With Other Parts of the Political System

Local, state, and national leaders of the peasant union movement manifest an extensive network of formal and informal linkages with other parts of the political system. This network provides the structural access to decision-making arenas which peasant movement leaders need at all levels to control or influence governmental decisions which affect

Table 8. Associational Sequence In the Recruitment of FCV Leaders

Leadership Level	Average Number of Years Affiliated With:		
	Political Party	Labor Movement	Federación Campesina
National (N = 24)	17	16	14
State (N = 23)	16	14	8
Local (N = 118)	14	8	7

the interests of their campesino constituents. This is especially important at the state and national level in regard to agrarian reform policy-making and budgetary support.

The most important informal linkages of peasant union leaders are forged with the various political parties participating in the FCV. These linkages consist not merely of membership, but of activities as party leaders. Of the 118 local leaders interviewed, 25.4 percent held, or had held, a local political party office; an additional 5.1 percent had held more than one local party office. On the state and national levels, the identity was complete: all peasant union movement leaders held simultaneous offices in their political party. In most cases, the party office was either as Agrarian Secretary of the local, state, or national Executive Committees of the party, or as a member of the party Agrarian Bureau at the appropriate organizational level. The access which these linkages furnish to decision-making forums is extremely important, especially at the national level. By virtue of them, peasant union leaders participate in the establishment of party positions regarding agrarian reform policy; congressional support of, or opposition to, agrarian reform agency budgetary requests; appointments to governmental positions in these agencies; and so forth. The holding of closely related union and party roles, especially on the state and national levels, suggests that neither role can be analyzed distinct from the other--rather we are dealing with a fused, or multifunctional, role. It is precisely this leadership role-fusion which provides the primary tie between the peasant movement and the larger political system.

On the formal political level, peasant union leaders often have achieved linkages with the political system through the electoral process. Among the local leaders in our sample, 15.2 percent had been elected to local governmental or law enforcement positions, thereby extending their knowledge of, and influence in, the municipal and county governmental process. Of the state FCV leaders interviewed, 39.1 percent had been elected or appointed to public offices at the local or state level of government. The 24 national peasant union movement

leaders interviewed included five who had been, or were at the time of interview, elected members of their state legislative assemblies; and two AD leaders, one COPEI leader, and one URD leader were members of the congress--the Chamber of Deputies--at the time of interview. While these linkages are closely related to political party affiliation, they extend the influence of peasant union leaders beyond the informal party decision-making forums into the most formal and august legal decision-making institutions in the nation.

Formal linkages with other parts of the political system have been granted to FCV officials by law and decree; positions on various boards and committees within the major governmental agencies administering the agrarian reform program have thereby been established for representatives of the Federación Campesina. Thus, two peasant union movement representatives--one named by AD, and one by COPEI--hold voting positions on the five-man Board of Directors of the National Agrarian Institute (IAN); an AD representative holds a voting position on the Board of Directors of the Banco Agrícola (BAP); and peasant leaders from all three parties--AD, COPEI, and URD--hold positions on 11 product advisory boards in the Ministry of Agriculture (MAC), four credit or special program boards in BAP, one seat on the Rural Housing Board of Consultants, and one membership in the Directorate of the National Institute for Culture and Education.

Taken together, these linkages tie the peasantry, through the leadership of the Federación Campesina, into the larger political system. Moreover, the ties are not merely structural, but functional. The functions of this specialized subsystem are focused on agrarian reform problem-solving--it will subsequently be called "the rural problem-solving system."

The rural problem-solving system may be defined as that political subsystem in Venezuela which functions to change, ameliorate, or eliminate those rural conditions which constitute a life-problem for the campesino population. The goals of this particular system are determined by the nature and extent of the environmental problems which are experienced by, and have a subsequent impact on the behavior of, the Venezuelan campesino.

As Figure 1 suggests, certain consequences flow from the problematic rural environment in the form of campesino behavior--union joining and voting support for pro-agrarian reform political parties. The men who fill the leadership roles in the Federación Campesina, and in public offices (which are filled as a result of the impact of the campesino electorate) function to influence, shape, and direct the programs of the national government into an effective instrument of agrarian reform. The agrarian reform, in turn, is intended to change the environmental conditions which generate the problems facing the campesino masses. Thus the major flow of relationships forms a complete, self-sustaining cycle of interdependent functions--in a phrase, a rural problem-solving system.

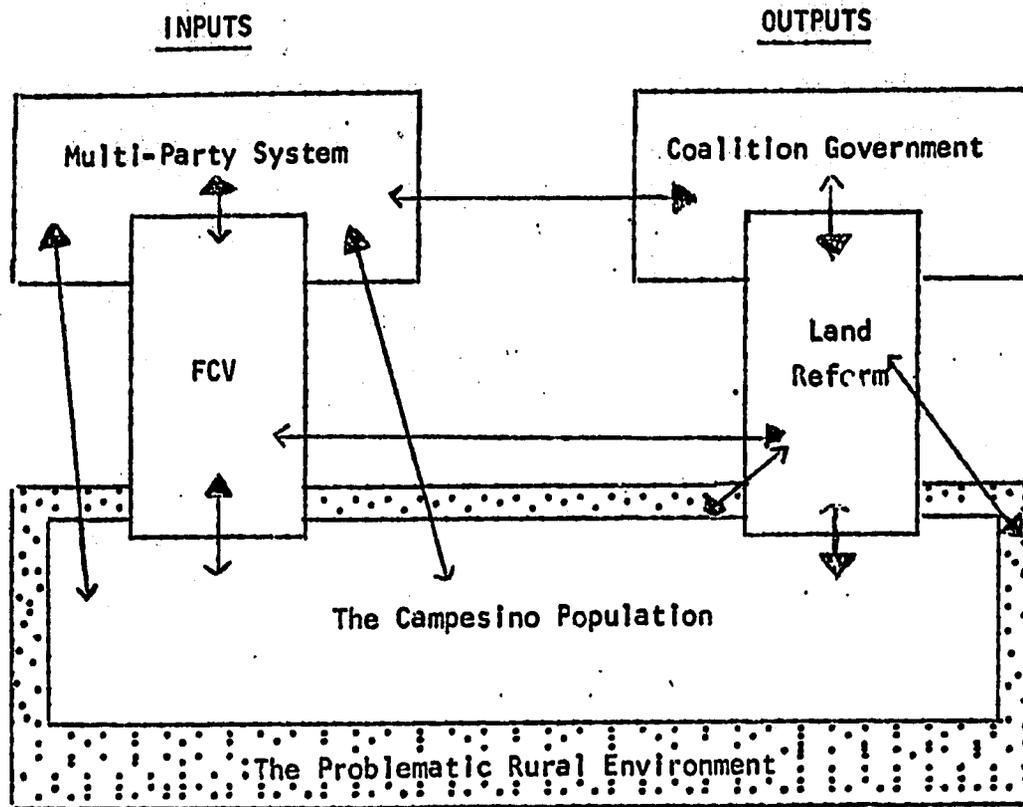


Figure 1. Schematic conceptions of the structure of the rural problem-solving system.

The Problem-Solving Process:
Seeking Solutions

The rural problem-solving system is grounded in the problematic aspects of the rural environment. The problem-solving process, therefore, commences with the experience of unsatisfactory or tension-inducing life conditions in the rural areas.³⁵ The specific environmental conditions which are experienced as unsatisfactory (or problematic) determine the subsequent behavior of the campesinos and their leaders in the FCV in seeking relief through collective action. In order to understand the problem-solving process, therefore, we must first seek to identify concretely the conditions which motivate problem-solving attempts--what is it that disturbs the campesino population? In order to answer that question, our sample of local peasant union leaders was asked: "In your opinion, what is the most important problem which confronts the members of your syndicate?"

The answers, as presented in Table 9, demonstrate a large residue of concern for land and the administration of the agrarian reform program, even after six years of vigorous attempts to solve such problems by Presidents Betancourt and Leoni. A variety of other problems concerning health and other living conditions also received first mentions, indicating the existence of a broad range of dissatisfactions among the peasantry.

Table 9. Perceptions of the Most Serious Problem in the Rural Areas of Venezuela

Greatest Problem	Percent Mentioning
Lack of sufficient land	28.0
Inefficiencies in agrarian reform	17.8
Lack of roads	11.9
Lack of potable water supply	11.0
Lack of agricultural credits	6.8
Lack of schools and teachers	5.1
Unsanitary, poor housing	5.1
Farm-related problems ^a	4.2
Lack of medical facilities	3.4

N = 118.

^a Including lack of fertilizers and hybrid seeds, fencing, machinery, etc.

A question was also put to the sample as to how serious they considered a specified list of problems to be for their campesino neighbors and themselves: very serious, not very serious, or no problem at all. Since the list was designed on the basis of pre-knowledge of the most prevalent problem-conditions in Venezuela, it included all but one of the items mentioned in Table 10.³⁶

While local FCV leaders have some differences of opinion as to which problem they consider to be the most serious (in their particular neighborhood), there is a remarkable degree of consensus on the fact that a cluster of problem-conditions--lack of land, proper housing,

Table 10. Perceptions of the Gravity of the Problems Which Exist in the Rural Environment

Nature of Problem	Characterization of Problem (Percent)			Gravity Rank ^a
	Grave	Minor	No Problem	
Lack of medical facilities	68.6	15.3	11.9	1
Lack of sufficient land	67.8	14.4	12.7	2.5
Unsanitary, poor housing	67.8	17.8	11.0	2.5
Lack of agricultural credits	64.4	11.9	16.9	4
Lack of roads	61.0	20.3	13.6	5.5
Lack of potable water supply	61.0	13.6	21.2	5.5
Lack of schools and teachers	39.8	22.9	33.1	7
Farm-related problems	35.6	23.7	32.2	8

N = 118.

^a Ranking percentage of "grave" responses.

medical facilities, credit, and sanitary drinking water--are very serious for the campesino population. We can consider these problems, then, to be basic conditioning factors in the process of rural problem-solving. They constitute the problematic elements in the rural environment which generate the activity necessary to energize the problem-solving system, and provide the basic set of goals toward which that system is working.

The experience of living in these problematic conditions fosters a responsiveness on the part of the campesino masses to appeals by political and union leaders. Political party leaders and union leaders both offer outlets for rural discontent by harnessing it in ways related to the solution of the unsatisfactory, or problematic, conditions. Thus, rural voters are induced to vote for AD or COPEI by relating their activities to the establishment and administration of the government's agrarian reform program, and by offering party solutions to inefficiencies or inadequacies of the reform. The response of rural voters to these appeals has been sufficient to make AD and COPEI the two most popular parties in Venezuela--for while urban voters greatly outnumber rural voters, the stability of the rural loyalties to AD and COPEI--and the

fickle nature of the leftist-oriented urban voter--has insured that these two parties have either dominated or actively participated in the governmental process since 1958.³⁷

Peasant union leaders appeal to the campesinos to participate even more directly in a collective attack on the problem conditions in which they live. Attendance at union meetings is one such form of participation. Our survey data indicate that 72.0 percent of the FCV locals hold meetings at least once a month (52.5 percent bimonthly or weekly). Into these meetings come the campesinos, carrying with them their direct knowledge of problem conditions, and their desires for relief. Meetings of the local unions revolve almost entirely about the discussion of community problems--80.5 percent (95) of our local samples reported that this was the most common activity of the local. Campesino leaders report to the members the status of problem-solving activities already being carried on, and campesino members raise new problem-observations, demands for relief, or complaints about the status of unresolved problems. Thus campesinos contribute in two ways to the problem-solving process at this level: they formulate precise demands for problem-solving activity, and they provide feedback on ongoing solution-attempts. Both of these contributions, of course, depend on the functioning of the local leader. He must either respond directly, if the necessary resources are within his control, or must process the campesino demands and pass them on to other parts of the problem-solving system.

In short, the problem-conditions with which he is confronted generate within the Venezuelan campesino a certain potential for mobilization. If political and union leaders can stimulate him with suggestions of ways and means of solving his problems, and guide him into patterns of behavior related to their solutions, the campesino makes valuable contributions to the functioning of the problem-solving system. In so performing, the campesino is mobilized into participation in political and union activities which directly or indirectly contribute to the solution of his problems. The extent of this participant behavior can be inferred from the table which presents data on a national random sample of three campesino groups (including non-unionized as well as unionized respondents) (see Table 11).

Once campesino demands for problem-solutions have been entered into the forum of the peasant union meeting, what is the next step in the problem-solving process? What do the local union leaders do? (See Table 12.)

The major function performed by local union leaders is brokerage. They assist the union members in obtaining benefits available under government programs, such as farm credit, and solicit the application of other government resources and programs in their communities to solve the particular problems which concern their campesino constituents.

Table 11. Campesino Participation in Syndicate and Political Activities^a

Activity	Group (Percent)		
	Asentados	Non-Asentados	Farm Laborers
Attended union meeting last six months	61.3	34.4	27.2
Attended party meeting last six months	35.1	26.8	14.8
Worked for party or candidate in last election	24.6	16.4	14.2
N =	(191)	(183)	(166)

^aCONVEN.

Brokerage is not exhausted by the submission of a petition to the appropriate government agency for a program of action in a particular rural neighborhood. We found that the local FCV leaders actively followed up such petitions through face-to-face contacts with the regional or local representatives of the three major agrarian reform agencies-- the Instituto Agrario Nacional (IAN), the Banco Agrícola y Pecuario (BAP), and the Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría (MAC). (See Table 13.)

Factor analysis revealed that the respondents in our sample reporting "never" having had face-to-face contact with agrarian reform officials from IAN, BAP, or MAC differed from the other respondents in the following ways:

1. They had been more recently elected to their union position;
2. They had held local political party offices to a lesser extent;
3. They tended to be affiliated with COPEI rather than with AD or URD.³⁶

These factors support our interpretation of the function of local union leaders as brokers and expeditors in the problem-solving process-- the greater the extent of a leader's political linkages and union experience, the more likely he was to utilize the face-to-face contact with agrarian reform representatives in seeking government responses to the expressed needs of his campesino clients.

Table 12. Reported Activities of Local Peasant Union Leaders

Nature of Activity	Percentage Reporting
Help members obtain agricultural credits	78.0
Petition Ministry of Education	69.5
Petition for land from IAN	66.9
Petition for rural housing projects	66.1
Petition for penetration roads	65.3
Petition for health and sanitation projects	65.3
Organize educational events for members	37.3
Sponsor social events (dances, festivals)	36.4
Sponsor athletic events or activities	24.6
N = (118)	

While it was found that local union leaders preferred to proceed directly to representatives of agrarian reform agencies in most problem situations, they tended to proceed next to the state FCV hierarchy if dissatisfied with the local response. The responses of local agrarian reform representatives might be limited by lack of resources, or the scope and nature of the problem-situation, or partisan discrimination, or even more personal incompetence. In any case, local leaders in such a situation utilize their political and union linkages to appeal to other parts of the problem-solving system for assistance and action. The Federación Campesina seems to provide an especially open (and logical) route for such appeals. The state FCV officials, and sometimes even national FCV officials, can be approached to use their political and labor movement linkages to extend and amplify the influence of the local leader. Hierarchs have access to decision-making arenas beyond the reach, influence, or control, of the typical local leaders. When local leaders encounter difficult or unusual obstacles in the pursuit of their brokerage functions, they are likely to turn to a higher organizational level within the FCV for help. Moreover, the state and national FCV officials seem to be open, or accessible to such contacts. The following question was posed to our sample. "In case you urgently needed to get in contact with a member of the state (national) FCV Executive Committee, do you think this would be easy, not very difficult, difficult, or almost impossible?" The replies are tabulated in Table 14.

Table 13. Intergroup Contacts of Local Peasant Syndicate Leaders (Percent)

Frequency of Personal Contact	Contacts Reported With			
	IAN Officials	BAP Officials	MAC Extension Agents	State FCV Officials
Daily or weekly	21.2	16.1	13.5	11.9
Monthly or yearly	36.5	35.5	34.8	47.4
Infrequently	6.8	8.5	10.1	21.2
Never	34.7	39.0	40.7	6.8
N = (118)				

Of those who responded that such contact would be "difficult" or "almost impossible," approximately 85 percent gave reasons such as the distances involved, or the lack of adequate communications facilities, etc.--and less than 5 percent indicated that the obstacle was perceived to lie in a lack of receptivity on the part of the FCV hierarchy. This indicates that one of the basic functions of the state and national leaders of the Federación Campesina consists in passing on, augmenting with the weight and authority of their status, and otherwise maximizing the brokerage influence of the local FCV leaders.

Table 14. Perceptions of Ease of Access to FCV Hierarchy by Local Leaders

Contact Would be	With State Leaders (Percent)	With National Leaders (Percent)
Easy	55.1	31.4
Not very difficult	20.3	22.9
Difficult	21.2	30.5
Almost impossible	0.8	5.9
N = (118)		

Being leaders, however, state and national FCV officials are not merely servants of the local FCV officials. They help to influence and control those images and expectations of the local leaders (and the campesino members) which structure the transmission of demands for action. For instance, during the early Betancourt administration, local unions were persuaded by national leaders to cease sponsoring land invasions, which were threatening the stability of the government by arousing political hostility. Later, the FCV was induced to restrain its pressure for immediate large-scale distributions of land under the agrarian reform program, in favor of carrying forward an integrated reform--which promised long-range, and not simply stopgap, relief from the problems concerning the campesino masses. In both these cases, local union leaders and their followers were successfully persuaded to defer temporarily their particular demands in order to meet the requirements for the political survival of the overall problem-solving system.

At the level of national leadership of the peasant union movement, the brokerage function, manifestly a role of influence, and highly political in the broad sense, reaches its most sophisticated and effective form. For here, not only are specific requests for assistance in solving specific local problems skillfully transmitted to the proper structures in the government, and conveyed with the political influence necessary to ensure attention to the matter, but the brokerage function is generalized. Thus national peasant union leaders, especially those affiliated with partners in the government coalition, can serve generally as spokesmen for the interests of the campesinos in important decision-making councils. For instance, during the process of agrarian reform agency budgetary preparations and requests, peasant union leaders participate in at least three important decision-making events. And two of the AD national peasant movement leaders--Armando R. Gonzales, President of the Federación Campesina, and Eustacio Guevara, the AD national Agrarian Secretary--are members of the elite 15-member party Executive Committee, which meets every Wednesday afternoon with President Leoní to discuss the strategy and tactics of coalition politics. Both men pronounce themselves satisfied that on such occasions, they are able adequately to protect the interests of the campesino sector of the party in any decisions affecting it.³⁹

The Problem-Solving Process: Getting Results

The bulk of this report is devoted to a description and analysis of the agrarian reform program which has resulted in great part from the voting and problem-solving behavior of the campesino masses and their peasant union leaders. Here we will be concerned with relating the distribution of problem-solving results. In other words, how closely are the sources of peasant union pressure related to the areas in which agrarian reform benefits are distributed?

In order to seek an answer to this question, a multiple-regression analysis was performed utilizing aggregate statistical data by state. Fifteen variables were hypothesized to be possible sources of pressure, or inputs, into the problem-solving system--these included a measurement of peasant union membership. These inputs were related to 13 measurements of government outputs, or benefits under the agrarian reform program, such as land, credits, infrastructure investments by agrarian reform agencies, etc. Experimental regression equations were run to determine which combinations of input measurements yielded the maximum explanatory power (the co-efficient of determination-- r^2) concerning the distribution of outputs. The results reported below concern the six dependent variables--or outputs--for which our regression equations yielded significant co-efficients of determination.

In order independently to measure the impact of the input variables measuring peasant union pressures, the same process was repeated, dropping out these two measurements, and confining the input variables to the remaining 13. Table 15 summarizes the findings, and suggests the impact of the presence or absence of peasant union pressures in the distribution of agrarian reform benefits.

Table 15. Comparison of Total Variation Explained in Outputs With and Without Syndicate Pressure Inputs

Dependent Variable (Outputs)	Max. r^2 with Union Inputs Included	Max. r^2 with Union Inputs Excluded	Differ- ences in r^2
Total IAN Expenditures	.81	.78	.03
Campesino Credits	.59	.43	.16
Families Given Private Lands	.53	.39	.14
Acres of Private Land Distributed	.45	.21	.24
Families Given Public Lands	.41	.12	.29
Acres of Public Lands Distributed	.36	.07	.29
Averages.	.52	.33	.19

While the data in Table 15 cannot be taken to measure precisely the independent impact of syndicate pressure (since many of the other input variables may contain syndicate pressure effects, and thus be including them indirectly), the pattern of the data is consistent and clear: the existence of a syndicate in an area, and the intensity of syndicate pressures, will have a positive effect on that area by bringing it the benefit of the agrarian reform. The data suggest that unionization has more of an effect in the distribution of certain benefits, such as land, and the number of families which such land will support, than on the distribution of other benefits such as credits, or overall investments. This seems logical from the point of view of sound banking principles, which would operate to insulate credit criteria from such pressures as could be brought to bear by union and political forces. It also seems logical that the overall pattern of IAN investments would be relatively unaffected by the presence or absence of union pressures, since such investments include large infrastructure items such as roads (which are located according to geographic possibility and the existence of marketing centers, or connecting transportation arteries), and aqueducts, irrigation, and drainage works (which depend for their location on natural geographic conditions).

In summary, the hypothesization that the Venezuelan problem-solving system is responsive to the inputs generated by the Federación Campesina is supported by the foregoing regression analysis. But the nature of the systemic response is limited, and conditioned by other factors, such as the potential return on agrarian reform investments in terms of agricultural productivity, and other technical considerations. The fact that the systemic response is limited by such considerations seems to be a clear indication that policy has been made in response to campesino pressures, but the nature of the subsequent outputs has been heavily infused with rational considerations by the government's output managers.

An Evaluation of the Agrarian Reform By
Local Peasant Union Leaders

In view of the almost overwhelming dimensions of the problem situation with which they (local union leaders) are confronted, and in view of the imperfect (from their point of view) nature of the systemic response to their problem-solving demands, it was reasoned that local FCV leaders would be critical in their evaluation of how helpful the agrarian reform program had been in the solution of their particular problems. The data in Table 16 confirm this hypothesis.

The negative evaluations shown in Table 16 seem to be valid measurements of problem-solving performance as weighed against problem-solving desires on the part of local peasant union leaders. It is important to note that the question was asked in the context of a series of related questions which sought to identify, and measure the gravity

of, the specific problems confronting the union leader and his followers. Then the leader was asked if the agencies and organizations mentioned in Table 16 had been of much, little, or no help in the solution of those particular problems. Thus a quite precise and concretely-focused evaluation was obtained. To check the validity of this response, we tested the respondent's general attitude toward the same agencies and organizations at a later point in the questionnaire--and the responses were overwhelmingly positive: 94.1 percent approved of the agrarian reform program in general; 98.3 percent approved of the Federación Campesina; 86.4 percent of BAP; 89.8 percent of IAN; and 89.8 percent of MAC. It is submitted, therefore, that the data in Table 16 precisely measure local peasant union leaders' evaluation of specific task performance, and not general dissatisfaction with the program or its constituent parts.

Furthermore, factor analysis revealed two characteristics which tended to make certain leaders more negative in their evaluations than the others. The fewer face-to-face contacts a local leader had experienced with representatives of the agrarian reform agencies, the more negative he was in his evaluation of their usefulness in solving his particular problems; and the local union leaders affiliated with COPEI and URD tended to be much more negative in their evaluations of agency performance than their AD colleagues--although AD leaders, too, were negative to a significant extent.

The important point here would seem to be that while local union leaders may identify with their political party and its positive role in the agrarian reform program, this identification is by no means indiscriminate. Local peasant union leaders are perfectly capable, and apparently quite willing to objectively judge the end product of the agrarian reform program as it affects the particular problems in their communities--and this judgment more often than not is quite critical. The implication of this, of course, is that the continued exertion of pressure for improvement in the performance of problem-solving tasks ought in time to be fed back through the problem-solving system and result in beneficial changes--in the absence of any gross inefficiencies or obstacles internal to the system. Only careful observation over time could determine whether such obstacles exist within the present system or not; it seems likely that they do.

A second important point derived from an analysis of the evaluational responses of local leaders is that the organizations and agencies in which local union leaders have the greatest degree of influence and control--the FCV, the Administrative Committees (which in almost every case are identical with the Executive Committee of the local unions), and the political party--receive the highest rankings, while agencies and programs which are determined by outside experts utilizing rational criteria in their decision-making--housing projects, extension services, and rural road building--receive the lowest utility ranking. This suggests that what makes the favorably ranked organizations so useful to the local leader is the opportunity they present to him to participate in the decision-making process--expressing his own opinions (and having them taken into account), pressing for the interests of his constituents,

Table 16. Local FCV Leaders' Evaluations of How Helpful Agrarian Reform Agencies and Programs Have Been in Solving Their Problems

Agency or Program	Has Given (Percent)			Net Score ^a Percent	Rank
	Much Help	Little Help	No Help		
Federación Campesina	39.8	30.5	27.1	+12.7	1
Admin. Committee ^b	16.1	24.6	27.1	+11.0	2
Political Party	28.0	28.0	40.7	-12.7	3
BAP Credit Program	22.0	38.1	38.1	-16.1	4
IAN Rural Road	24.6	27.1	46.6	-22.0	5
Rural Road Program	14.4	26.3	55.1	-40.7	6
MAC Extension Service	12.7	25.4	58.5	-45.8	7
Rural Housing Program	15.3	17.8	65.3	-50.0	8

N = 118.

^aNet score equals percent "much help" minus percent "no help."

^bAdministrative Committees are bodies elected from among the settlers on agrarian reform projects, as provided by law.

and generally exerting his influence as a community leader in a pluralistic political process; and that these organizations are responsive to such inputs.⁴⁰

The Capacity for Functional Growth In the Federación Campesina

The functional requirements of the Federación Campesina have changed over time. Before the problem-solving system was established through a political revolution of profound dimensions, the peasant union movement was required to recruit campesino leaders and members on a mass basis; once the political revolution occurred in 1945, the

organizational requirements were to insure massive electoral support of the party which promised to bring radical changes in the rural areas; once these changes were set in motion, the peasant union movement was an essential element in their organization and administration. During the ten years of the dictatorship, the peasant union movement clandestinely nurtured the bases of political organization and mass support necessary to re-enter the governmental process upon the fall of the dictator. Since 1958, the functional requirements placed on the Federación Campesina, by virtue of its central position in the problem-solving system, have continued to change and become more sophisticated. The day may be envisaged--let us guess within a generation or two--when the primary role of the contemporary peasant union movement--brokerage pressure--will have exhausted its necessity, and when local peasant union leaders and campesinos will no longer require political influence and pressures to accomplish local problem-solving tasks, but may rely on an institutionalized bureaucratic process. If the Federación Campesina is going to survive as a mass-appeal organization, it will by that time have responded to the changing needs of its peasant constituency, and have entered into the performance of new and different functions and services for the campesinos.

Since 1962, the Federación Campesina has demonstrated such a capacity for organizational adaptation to changing membership needs and new opportunities. It has done so by initiating new membership service programs at the national level. The national organization, having command of a fairly broad range of resources, is in a position to perform certain services for its campesino members which would be beyond the capabilities of the local, or even the state, organizations. Certain of these functions are educational in nature, and are designed better to equip the campesino to deal with his problems as a cultivator. Others are aimed directly at the relief of problem conditions such as marketing obstacles, lack of mechanized equipment (and the knowledge of how to use it), and so forth.

One of the most important of these service functions is campesino education. Under the sponsorship and direction of the national Secretary for Culture and Publications, Dr. Julio Manuel Montoya, the Federación Campesina, beginning late in 1962, organized a series of Escuelas de Capacitación Campesina--Peasant Vocational Schools--for FCV members. By 1966 the first four of the planned ten of these vocational training centers were in full operation, teaching campesinos basic farm technology, including: beef and dairy cattle operations on a small scale; basic food cultivation; hog and poultry raising; use of agricultural credits; agrarian reform; and syndicate organization. Classes are organized in groups of 60, and the courses run for two months (six days a week, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., including night classes in reading and writing). The basic objective of the courses is not to produce farm technicians, but to send the campesino back to his family farm with a rudimentary, but solid, basis for improving his standard of living; and to open up for him the possibility of entering the commercial market on a modest scale. It is also an explicit objective of the training centers to create

a sort of in-group 'demonstration' effect for other members of the syndicate. The operation of these schools, which have been quite successful to date, has required a minimum of investment by the Federación Campesina. IAN has provided the land and buildings (such as former construction camps); MAC has provided the staff and livestock; BAP has provided credits to put the student-run farm on a self-supporting basis; and the various state governments have helped to cover operating expenses. Such cooperation is a fairly convincing demonstration of the advantages which the FCV enjoys due to its linkages with political and governmental structures.

The Federación Campesina began to set up another series of campesino service enterprises early in 1965. This important group of activities has been given a high priority by the national FCV leadership. The first of these enterprises to be organized was SUCAM (Suministros Campesinos), a privately managed firm in which the FCV is the principal stockholder. SUCAM imports agricultural machinery for sale to FCV syndicates and individual members. Since the FCV can guarantee a large and controllable market (i.e., the 550,000 campesino members), SUCAM can contract with large manufacturers (Oliver, John Deere, etc.) to provide discount prices spare parts stocking, and servicing. Such an arrangement has permitted campesino groups to purchase tractors, for instance, for as much as 25 percent below the commercial market price in their area. Closely linked to SUCAM is another campesino enterprise, SERVICAM (Servicios Campesinos). This organization was established under contract with the same farm machinery companies which import the SUCAM equipment: the companies engaged to train campesinos as mechanics for the repair and maintenance of farm machinery, and to assist in the setting up of FCV-run SERVICAM repair shops in the rural areas. The FCV was pressed into this area of activity due to the intransigence of local farm-machinery franchise holders who refused to repair or service farm machinery imported by SUCAM, an obvious competitor. By 1966, SUCAM had completed its first successful year of operations, and SERVICAM was beginning to emerge from the planning stage, although experiencing difficulties in obtaining and keeping an effective management team.

The Federación Campesina has established another modestly successful operation called INDUCAM (Industrias Campesinas), which consists of a rice-processing factory on the huge, irrigated, agricultural colony and agrarian reform settlement of Calabozo. INDUCAM has managed to contract the sale of the output of its high-quality rice with the nationwide Rockefeller supermarket chain, CADA (Compañía Anónima Distribuidora de Alimentaciones), thus assuring a solid market outlet for the rice raised by members of the Calabozo syndicates and processed in the FCV's campesino-manned rice plant.

In the field of marketing, the FCV has attempted to penetrate the local networks, but has run into resistance and problems. It is now seeking new ways and means of getting around such obstacles as boycotts of campesino-produced crops (in favor of privately produced crops) by agricultural processors (this happened in 1963, when a bumper tomato crop produced on the agrarian reform settlement of "La Julia" was lost due to the refusal of the local tomato processors to deal with

the syndicate representatives trying to sell the crop). The national FCV succeeded in 1965 in obtaining an export contract with North American buyers for the output of "La Julia" and other tomato-producing agrarian reform settlements. Also underway are efforts to establish an organized net of farmer's markets, to be called MERCAM (Mercadeo Campesino). Although the first such market, which will provide the FCV campesino members with a direct outlet in Caracas (eliminating the rapacious middlemen--"la rosca acaparadora"), was reportedly to be opened sometime in 1966, the direct-marketing effort has run into a variety of difficulties and setbacks (which seem, among other things, to be at least partly due to a lack of sufficient marketing experts involved in the efforts to establish MERCAM).

Conclusions

From the data uncovered during the course of the research process and analyzed in this chapter, certain conclusions may be drawn concerning the role of the Federación Campesina in the agrarian reform--some positive, and some negative in nature. These conclusions are reasoned as closely as possible from concrete evidence, and not from a priori premises.

The negative conclusions concerning the role of the FCV in the agrarian reform revolve around the potential dangers of its marriage to politics.⁴¹ From the point of view of agricultural development through the agrarian reform process, one such danger is that the role of the peasant union movement might be manipulated for political reasons unconnected with the interests or needs of the campesino membership. Yet the probability with which such a danger is likely to occur is limited by several rather basic factors which are built into the present situation. In the first place, we have seen that local union leaders possess the capacity to evaluate the agrarian reform objectively in terms of its concrete usefulness to their communities in the solving of their problems. If peasant interests were subordinated to partisan political interests to a degree which was unacceptable to the campesinos and their local leaders, a reaction could be expected. And since there are definite elements of overt competition within the peasant union movement--among leaders in the same party (competing through the internal FCV electoral process for the top positions of power); and between the different parties (competing for the loyalty of campesino followers)--a subordination of peasant interests by political manipulators could not endure for long before campesino members were attracted to other leadership foci. For the same reason--the presence of competitive factors within the FCV--such manipulation would be unlikely to occur in the first place; for the top leadership in the peasant union movement, well-seasoned political professionals, would hardly alienate the basis of their own power--the loyalty of the campesino masses.

A more likely danger inherent in the union-party role fusion of peasant union leaders is that a leader may become embroiled in an internal party controversy, essentially unrelated to campesino interests, which might nonetheless impair his usefulness as a campesino leader. Such an internal party controversy, for instance, may involve competition for the party's presidential nomination. Competitors for such a prize may recruit the support of peasant union leaders, whose political futures are then entangled with that of the candidate. Exactly such a situation occurred during the winter of 1965-66 within URD. The competition became acute enough that the competitor for the party's presidential nomination with whom the peasant union leaders were entangled was maneuvered out of the party altogether, prompting the resignation from URD of the entire National Campesino Directorate. The primary assets of these men as campesino leaders--their political and personal linkages with the coalition government--were gravely endangered, if not completely cancelled by this move. Acción Democrática has experienced internal cleavages in the past--1960 and 1961-62--which involved peasant union leaders, and which had an important effect on their usefulness to their campesino constituents. The group of AD leaders in the FCV elected in 1962 replaced other AD leaders who, united behind the radical Ramón Quijada, were purged from the overall labor movement and the party.

Within Acción Democrática, such an internal cleavage over the party's presidential nomination had begun to build up as early as 1965. Evidence that this cleavage (which pitted a more radical reformist wing within AD against the moderate-conservative elements of the party) was exerting an effect on the leadership of the FCV showed up clearly in our survey of local leaders during the spring of 1966. At that time, I was of the opinion that the return-to-radicalism forces within AD would win out, perhaps enhancing AD's electoral situation by appealing to a larger urban electorate in 1968.

However, by late 1967, the cleavage had reached the proportions of a most grave crisis for Acción Democrática, and the moderate-conservative wing, hewing to the politics established by Betancourt during his tenure as President, attempted to purge the numerous and well-organized radical faction of the party, united under the leadership of Jesús Paz Galarraga behind the Presidential candidacy of Pireto Figueroa. Such a drastic development, it seems, will inevitably weaken the élan of Acción Democrática, and may in the long run prove the beginning of the end of governmental domination by AD. Its internal effects on the FCV are problematic, but it is known that large numbers of national, state, and local leaders are on the "losing" side of the

succession struggle and purge. The passage of time may prove that both factions of AD leadership will prove losers, slipping from their previous position of dominance in the rural problem-solving system.

Another potential danger in the political marriage of the peasant union movement is the uncertainty of the electoral future of the parties to which it is tied. If the urban Left vote ever coagulates, both AD and COPEI, with their solid, but small, bases of rural support, are liable to be defeated at the polls and excluded from the government. In such a case, what would become of the peasant union movement, identified as it is with these two parties, and marginally with URD? Similarly, what would become of the peasant union movement in the event of an anti-reform military coup d'etat? From what we know happened in 1948, such an eventuality is not pleasant to contemplate.

The fact is, however, that most of these negative conclusions concern potential dangers. The potential is real, but we can only speculate about what might occur, if. The potential has existed since 1936, when the peasant union movement was born, the offspring of the marriage of union and political party goals. Yet, none of the dangers alluded to above has substantially altered the rural problem-solving system so far. And since 1958, with the additional element of interparty competition in the peasant union movement, the peasant has been given an increasing number of choices to make--among leaders, alternative programs of action, and in alternative routes and means of influence. It is realistic to recognize these negative conclusions concerning the role of the Federación Campesina in the agrarian reform, but they must be placed in the perspective of tentatively positive conclusions.

The first, and most solidly established of these positive conclusions is that the peasant union-political party marriage was a decisive element in producing the agrarian reform which this study is evaluating. Without this fusion of peasant unions with political parties, there would have been no such extensive reform. One need only compare the agrarian reforms of those countries in which such a peasant-party marriage occurred--Mexico, Bolivia, and Venezuela--with the agrarian reforms of the other sixteen Latin American Republics (the special case of Cuba excluded) to be convinced of this fact. While the economic aspects of these reforms

may fall short of desirable policy objectives, the socio-political revolutions which they have involved--and the incorporation of the campesino into the process of political participation--may well in the long run prove to be prerequisites for stable national development.

The basic success of the peasant movement-political party marriage in bringing about an agrarian reform program in Venezuela has been enhanced by a capacity on the part of local union leaders to retain a critical facility in judging the concrete accomplishments of the program. A propensity to improve, and increase efficiency in the carrying out of reform, is built into the system. Local union leaders communicate critical information, and demands for expansion of program activities, through the problem-solving system, to the men in government who administer the program. The top political managers of the system have an interest in seeing that this information is acted upon, insofar as resources permit--or risk alienating the electoral power base which maintains them in positions of power and influence. In short, the problem-solving process is self-sustaining and dynamic; being dependent upon successful performance, it has a built-in capacity to close on proximate solutions to intractable problems. Only insurmountable bureaucratic inefficiencies, or potentially disastrous political crises stand in the way of such closure.

The Federación Campesina, as the primary organizational manifestation of the peasant-party marriage, has demonstrated a capacity for institutional adaptability. The generation of new programs for its members since 1962 indicates that the FCV is capable of responding to functional requirements which cannot be met through governmental resources. The capacity for organizational learning, and functional adaptability, is built into the problem-solving system through the competitive internal electoral process of the Federación Campesina and the political parties. As long as the element of open competition for the loyalty of the mass membership remains present in the problem-solving system, that system will tend to be responsive to the changing needs and desires of the campesinos.

The basic success of the peasant union-political party marriage in bringing about the significant economic, social, and political changes involved in the Venezuelan agrarian reform, and the responsiveness-- imperfect though it may be--of the problem-solving system to the needs and demands of the peasants and their union leaders has deeply entrenched the Federación Campesina as a social institution in the rural areas. The 550,000 members of the Federación account for one out of every four Venezuelans living in communities with a population of less than 1,000-- and some 20,000 of these FCV members are local union leaders. That is to say, the FCV is a dominant social institution in the rural areas, and has co-opted a large number of indigenous leaders in the campesino sub-culture. Whether it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future depends not only on the vigorous recruiting programs being carried on by the nation's three leading political parties, but on the political fate of the parties themselves.

The local leadership pool of FCV leaders comprises a campesino elite. Highly indigenous, with deep community roots, local peasant union leaders are the rural community's intellectual, social, and political pace-setters. We have seen how they displaced the local landlord in the 1945-48 period as the principal power-holders in the rural areas. Since the fall of the dictatorship in 1958 and the re-establishment of the agrarian reform program, they have regained that status. The result of the revolution in local power status, placing campesino leaders in the dominant positions formerly occupied by the landowning classes, has been reflected in the sense of political efficacy of these competing elites. Efficacy, a subjective feeling on the part of an individual that he can influence government decisions, is considered a key characteristic of stable and modernizing societies, reflecting as it does the belief of citizens that they have some personal way of affecting the political forces which in turn shape their lives. It is a measure of confidence in the political system, as well as a measure of a knowledge of its concrete workings.⁴² In the following Table we have dramatic evidence that the local peasant union leader is the most optimistic of six rural groups tested for their sense of political efficacy.

The data in Table 17 reflect many important dimensions of the rural situation in Venezuela today. The local union leader is the man to see to get things done in most rural communities; the peasants know this, farm and ranch owners are (probably ruefully) aware of it, and the peasant union leaders themselves seem hopeful about the instrumental and effective powers which their position in the rural problem-solving system has granted them.

Campesinos, while feeling rather inadequate themselves as important or influential in the governmental process, apparently derive confidence from their association with local union leaders, for the difference in efficacy between those campesinos who are active union participants, and those who are not, is striking (see Table 18).

Table 17. Political Efficacy Among Rural Groups (Percent)^a

Measure	Campesinos					Syndi- cate Leaders
	Asen- tados	Non- asen- tados	Farm Labor- ers	Farm Owners	Ranch Owners	
Feel opinions are important	17	16	6	14	16	58
Feel efficacious to- ward national government	20	21	15	40	40	59
Feel efficacious to- ward local govern- ment	31	27	35	63	56	76
N =	(191)	(183)	(166)	(171)	(175)	(118)

^aThe data on the first five groups is adapted from CONVEN.

Table 18. Comparative Efficacy Measures of Selected Peasant Groups (Percent)^a

Measure	Asentados: Attend Union Meetings?		Non-asentados: Attend Union Meetings?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Feel opinions are important	22	10	25	10
Feel efficacious toward national government	23	13	25	14
Feel efficacious toward police	48	31	56	35
Feel efficacious toward local government	40	14	50	9

^aAdapted from CONVEN data supplied by John R. Mathiason of MIT.

All of our data point in the same direction: the peasant union movement is performing a political socialization function in Venezuela. Campesinos are, by associating with secondary, instrumental groups, being brought into a meaningful and productive relationship with their political system. From their participation in local syndicate activities, campesinos tend to become aware of what the governmental process is, how their political behavior can affect that process, and become more confident of the legitimacy and efficacy of their attempts to influence public policy. They recognize that their local leaders (if not themselves) possess the knowledge, skills, and linkages necessary to translate their desires into effective decision-making participation. More significantly, campesinos enjoy some control over the local union leadership through the internal electoral process. As rudimentary as it may be, the Federación Campesina is a union democracy. The political socialization process, therefore, is tending to produce citizens oriented toward the support of, and participation in, democratic forms of decision-making. Such a socialization effect, if maintained in the future, may have a significant impact on the viability of democracy in Venezuela.

Implications for Agricultural Development Policy

From these conclusions flow certain implications for agricultural development policy in Venezuela. They are general in nature, and relevant mainly for those involved in the economic aspects of policy-making. They are as follows:

1. Any current action program undertaken in Venezuela will interact with the Federación Campesina. The FCV is an established fact of life in the peasant subculture. Since this movement has to a large degree monopolized the energies and loyalties of the indigenous leadership within the peasant community, and is widely accepted by the rural masses, no program is likely to succeed which is actively opposed by it. In fact, no program is likely to succeed which does not enjoy the cooperation and active participation of the Federación Campesina in its activities. This implication has both its negative and positive aspects.
2. If the policy-maker accepts the foregoing implication, he must recognize that working through the FCV will place certain limits on his own policy objectives. The internal organizational life of the Federación Campesina limits the amount of control and manipulation possible by outside change agents for special goals and objectives, which for the FCV may be only marginal.
3. The major task of the outside policy-maker, therefore, might be to either adapt his own goals to those already incorporated in the organization framework of the existing problem-solving system; or to attempt to refine and rationalize some of the already existing goals by providing incentives for the system

to adapt to the objectives of the policy-maker. This is not an either-or proposition--the policy-maker may be able to do both.

4. Policy objectives such as cooperative programs of all types would be maximized through the Federación Campesina--where already established relationships of social cohesion and inter-personal loyalty exist. Such socio-psychological relationships, which are critical in collective enterprises, are among the most difficult conditions to establish in the initiation of cooperatives. By working through the FCV, such programs could count on an asset which has been built up and nurtured for thirty years by social and political leaders of great experience and consummate skill.
5. Outside organizational assistance to, or collaboration with, the Federación Campesina must be accomplished in such a manner as to maximize the interparty cooperation which now exists within the movement. As paradoxical as it seems, without such cooperation, the internal competition of the system would be diminished. This competition, which currently generates viable alternative choices for the campesino among leadership, and membership in unions affiliated with one party or another, is what provides the dynamism of the problem-solving system. All political elements currently participating in the peasant union movement must be provided with incentives to continue such participation.
6. If outside change agencies undertake, as a matter of policy decision, to work through the Federación Campesina, they must beware of too much success. In time, outside assistance and collaboration might incrementally adjust internal FCV goals and activities toward the policy objectives of the outside agency--but always at the hazard of disintegrating the presently successful problem-solving system. I am referring to an alienation of the leadership from the rank-and-file, which might occur if sufficient incentives were offered to induce the leaders to adopt goals and patterns of behavior which were too sophisticated, or "foreign" to be acceptable to the peasantry. In such a case, the outcome at best would be a revolt against the leadership from within, and their replacement with other leaders who might be difficult to work with; at worst, the outcome might be a general discreditation of the FCV within the peasant subculture. The strength of the Federación Campesina lies in its indigenous roots--and agents or agencies working within the FCV must always beware of developing cleavages between leaders and followers, thereby hazarding the very strength upon which they need to capitalize. To work successfully in such a complex situation will require sensitive policy execution as well as sensible policy-making.

7. Finally, the policy maker or outside change agent must recognize the uncertainties related to the political marriage of the peasant union movement. Not only will this occasionally involve inter-party strife within the FCV leadership and rank-and-file, but may on occasion, as in the AD crisis, threaten the entire problem-solving system as it has existed from 1958 through 1967. This marriage, I believe, was the making of the problem-solving system--but it may yet prove its undoing. The policy maker working with the Federación Campesina will soon realize that, for better or worse, he is dealing with a highly political adjunct to the national political system. This relationship must be taken into account in a realistic manner.

ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Acción Democrática
BAP	Banca Agrícola y Pecuaria
CADA	Compañía Anónima Distribuidora de Alimentaciones
CENDES	Center for Development Studies of the Central University of Caracas
CIDA	Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development
COPEI	Social Christian Party
FCV	Federación Campesina de Venezuela
IAN	Instituto Agraria Nacional
INDUCAM	Industrias Campesinas
ITIC	Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización
MAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MERCAM	Mercadeo Campesina
ORVE	Movimiento de Organización Venezolano
PDN	Partido Democrático Nacional
PDV	Partido Democrático Venezolano
SERVICAM	Servicios Campesinos
SUCAM	Suministros Campesinos
URD	Unión Republicana Democrática

FOOTNOTES

1. For a general treatment of Venezuelan economic history, see International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), The Economic Development of Venezuela (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961).
2. For a detailed analysis of these interrelationships, see John D. Powell, "The Politics of Agrarian Reform in Venezuela: History, System, and Process" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1966), Ch. 1. The dissertation is a substantially documented and expanded version of this paper.
3. The impact of "direct problem-solving activities" of Colombian peasants in the process of agrarian reform is related by Albert O. Hirschmann in Journeys Toward Progress (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1963), pp. 101-106, 259. The consequences, parallel to those in Venezuela, he characterizes as "a revolution by stealth." (p. 158).
4. Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, La Colonización Agraria en Venezuela: 1830-1957 (Caracas: MAC, 1957), pp. 24ff.
5. This and many other of the economic aspects of governmental policy during the period under discussion are treated in Rómulo Betancourt, Problemas Venezolanos (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Futuro, 1940).
6. Ramón Fernández y Fernández, Reforma Agraria en Venezuela (Caracas: Tip. Vergas, 1948). This is an excellent piece of analytic economic history.
7. For a careful reconstruction of these and other political developments, see John D. Martz, III, Acción Democrática: Evolution of a Modern Political Party (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).
8. Luis Enrique Osorio, "Rómulo Betancourt: Historia de un Político Popular," in Rómulo Betancourt: Interpretación de su Doctrina Popular y Democrática (Caracas: Ed. SUMA, 1955), p. 22.
9. Much of the information in this chapter is based on extensive interviewing of many of the participants in these events. See Powell, "Politics," op. cit., Appendix I.
10. For the original development of this doctrine, see Betancourt, Problemas, op. cit.
11. For details of these political developments, and documentary citations, see Powell, op. cit., Ch. IV.

12. See Edwin Lieuwen, Arms and Politics in Latin America (New York: Praeger, 1961), for details.
13. Fernández y Fernández, op. cit., p. 77.
14. For details, refer to Rómulo Betancourt, Trayectoria Democrática de Una Revolución (Caracas: Imp. Nacional, 1948), pp. 175ff, 194-195.
15. In this section, I have utilized a great deal of confidential, or "privileged," sources of information. They include interviews with former ITIC officials, personal and official papers concerning the 1945-48 agrarian reform, and internal political party documents of a confidential nature. I have cited corroborating public sources wherever possible in using this information; otherwise I cite The ITIC File. See Powell, "politics," op. cit., footnote 3, p. 134, for details.
16. Radio Broadcast on Radio Nacional, May 31, 1946.
17. For a general treatment of this concept, see Crane Brinton, The Anatomy of a Revolution (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Printice-Hall, 1965). For an example of the uses of the concept, see J.C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," American Sociological Review, Vol. 27 (1962), pp. 5-19.
18. Decreto de la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, "Decreto de Arrendamiento de Predios Rústicos," Gaceta Oficial, March 13, 1947 (No. 22, 261). The decree was administratively detailed and proclaimed by the Revolutionary Junta as Decreto No. 557, published in the Gaceta Oficial of June 4, 1947 (No. 22, 327).
19. See Powell, op. cit., pp. 122-123.
20. For an excellent interpretation of these and other events, see Luis Troconis Guerrero, La Cuestión Agraria en la Historia Nacional (Caracas: Ed. Sucre, 1953).
21. Martz, Acción Democrática, op. cit., relates many of the details of the coup and the resulting period of dictatorship.
22. República de Venezuela, Documentos Oficiales Relativos al Movimiento Militar del 24 de Noviembre de 1948 (Caracas: ONIP, 1949). See pp. 17-23.
23. For a first-hand and documented account of the political police, see José Vicente Abreu, Se Llamaba SN (Caracas: Ed. Catala, 1964). Abreu, a communist, was captured and imprisoned by the SN, as were many of the AD peasant union leaders active today in the Federación Campesina (Powell, op. cit., p. 156).

24. For a detailed analysis of the suppression of the Venezuelan labor movement, see International Labour Office, "Freedom of Association and Conditions of Work in Venezuela," Its Studies and Reports (Geneva: n.s., No. 21, 1950).
25. See the Memorias of the Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, and the Informes of the Danco Agrícola y Pecuaria during this period, under the heading "Movimiento de Bienes."
26. Powell, op. cit., Ch. VI.
27. Leo B. Lott, "The 1952 Venezuelan Elections: A Lesson for 1957," The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1957), pp. 541-558.
28. For details, see Armando R. González, Presencia del Proletariado de Venezuela en el Acontecer Político Temporal (Caracas: Acción Democrática, 1963).
29. Various interviews. This figure was confirmed by the results of our survey of local leaders in the Federación Campesina, conducted in February-March, 1966. This survey was conducted by the author, John R. Mathiason of MIT, and Michael Sund of CIDA.
30. Federación Campesina de Venezuela, "Estatutos de la Federación Campesina de Venezuela," mimeographed by the FCV in Caracas in June, 1959.
31. Data from local FCV leadership survey. A three-stage random sampling plan was employed to select and interview a total of 118 local leaders attending State Conventions of the FCV. For methodological details, see Powell, op. cit., Appendix III.
32. In addition to our own survey research, data are utilized in this chapter from the CONVEN research project conducted jointly by CENDES and MIT's Center for International Studies. Working papers and data from this project were generously supplied by John R. Mathiason of MIT. Some of the data have been published in Frank Bonilla and José Silva Michelena, eds., Studying the Venezuelan Polity (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967). See especially the excellent chapter by Mathiason, "The Venezuelan Campesino."
33. The above-average age of the median campesino in a very "young" society is partly related to the migration of young people from the country to the city. See Pola R. Ortiz and Yolanda D. Shaya, El Problema del Exodo Rural en Venezuela y Medidas Tendientes a su Solución (Caracas: MAC, 1964).
34. Some of the special characteristics of our sample of local FCV leaders should be pointed out, since they establish the credentials of these particular men to speak on problem conditions facing campesinos. First, local leaders are "live-in," and not "absentee" leaders--79.9 percent give the address of their personal residence as the same