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A Study of Costa Rica

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Nearly all Latin American countries have programs of agrarian reform. These range from "paper programs," as in Nicaragua, to massive ones, as in Cuba. While there has been considerable academic research on the nature of the reform laws and the economic advantages and disadvantages of the programs, little attention has been given to the impact of reform upon the beneficiaries, namely, the peasants themselves. This paper attempts to remedy this deficiency by studying the impact of agrarian reform on peasants in Costa Rica.¹

Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Arizona, Tucson. This article forms part of a larger study on Costa Rican peasants which has received generous support from the Social Science Research Council, the Danforth Foundation, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, Joint Population and Development Policy Research Program, and the Institute of Government Research of the University of Arizona.

¹Many students of Latin American agrarian reform are unaware of the severity of the land tenure problem in Costa Rica. This little country has been traditionally known for its strong yeoman class and its democratic tradition. James L. Busey, *Notes on Costa Rican Democracy* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1967); Kenneth F. Johnson, "Scholarly Images of Latin American Political Democracy in 1975," *Latin American Research Review* 11 (1976): 129-40. However, while democracy continues to show strong signs of viability, the yeoman is fast disappearing. That the distribution of land in Costa Rica is highly unequal has been consistently revealed by the four agricultural censuses conducted in the second half of the present century. The latest census, conducted in 1973, highlights the situation: 36.9 percent of the landholders own only 1 percent of the farmland, and the entire bottom half of the owners (57.6 percent) own only slightly less than 4 percent of the land. At the other end of the spectrum, the top 1 percent of all the largest farm owners own over 25 percent of all the land. At the very top are the 80 largest farms, which collectively own 463,754 hectares of land. The Gini Index of the overall distribution of land for 1973 is .82, which ranks Costa Rica as the twelfth most unequal of the 54 nations studied by Taylor and Hudson. Charles L. Taylor and Michael C. Hudson, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, 2d ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972).

While the problem of concentration of land among the landholders is acute, the problem of landlessness is even more serious. The data reveal that only 22 percent of the economically active peasant population are landholders.

The explanation for the deterioration of the land tenure situation in Costa Rica is complex and is reported on extensively elsewhere. Mitchell A. Seligson, *Agrarian Capitalism and the Transformation of Peasant Society: Coffee in Costa Rica*, Special Studies Series (Buffalo: State University of New York, 1975); idem, "Agrarian Policy in Dependent Societies: Costa Rica," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 19 (May 1977): 201-32; idem, "Prestige Among Peasants: A Multidimensional Analysis of Preference Data," *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (November 1977): 632-52; idem, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming). Suffice it to say that the relative equality in landholding began to change with the introduction of coffee cultivation in the early part of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the present century, after the rapid expansion of banana plantations, the Costa Rican yeoman was fast on the retreat, but the situation did not reach crisis proportions until the closing of the frontier sometime in the 1960s. Landless peasants, an increasing number of whom were being mechanized out of their jobs, have increasingly turned to the state for the resolution of their land problem. "Situación y perspectivas del empleo en Costa Rica" (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 1975).

There is a growing debate among observers of peasant society as to the nature of peasant attitudes and their susceptibility to change. Researchers have characterized peasants as "suspicious, distrustful, and envious of others, viewing the universe around them as essentially hostile";² highly fatalistic and not very empathetic;³ traditional;⁴ mistrustful;⁵ and politically powerless.⁶ This paper will investigate the susceptibility to change of some of these attitudes. In particular, the paper will seek to determine if some of the negative attitudes just listed can be altered by making an objective change in the peasants' living conditions through agrarian reform. The paper is divided in two parts: the first briefly outlines the Costa Rican agrarian reform programs, and the second attempts to study their impact on the peasants' social and political attitudes.

The Development of the Reform Program

The first effort at reform appeared in the 1940s. In 1942 the *Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería* (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock) was organized, and within it the *Oficina de Colonización y de Distribución de Tierras del Estado* (Office of Colonization and Distribution of State Lands) was created. This office was established not to effectuate agrarian reform, but to administer state forest reserves. Since sections of these reserve lands were being illegally occupied by private individuals (both large landholders and peasants alike), the Office was inexorably drawn into the business of settling land disputes. The Office of Colonization was not equipped, however, to handle the massive problem with which it found itself confronted. The office was staffed primarily by agronomists and agricultural technicians, whose expertise did not include handling land disputes. As a consequence, very little was accomplished.

By 1949 it had become clear that a more effective bureaucratic structure had to be evolved to deal with the land problem. Nothing concrete was accomplished, however, until 1961, when factors in the external environment stimulated new interest in reform. Costa Rican large landholders looked at the swift moving events in the Cuban Revolution and feared Costa Rica might be next. There is some evidence that the United States foreign aid mission was attempting to encourage some sort of reform.⁷ The United States position on the need for reform was articulated in August 1961, when the Conference of Punta del Este laid the foundations for the Alliance for Progress, a major component of which was the promulgation of agrarian reforms in participating states. A few months after the

²Foster, "Introduction: Peasant Character and Personality," in *Peasant Society: A Reader*, ed. Jacob M. Potter, May M. Diaz and George M. Foster (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967).

³Everett M. Rogers, *Modernization Among Peasants: The Impact of Communication* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

⁴Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

⁵Charles P. Loomis et al., *Turrialba, Social Systems and the Introduction of Change* (New York: Free Press, 1953), p. 206. For a full discussion of the distrust literature, see Mitchell A. Seligson and José Manuel Salazar X., "Political and Interpersonal Trust among Peasants: A Re-evaluation," *Rural Sociology* (in press).

⁶Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958), pp. 83-84.

⁷John Riisman, "Costa Rica: Self-Images, Land Tenure and Agrarian Reform" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972), pp. 203-22.

Punta del Este meeting, the logjam was broken and the agrarian reform law came into being on 14 October 1961.⁸

There has been much debate over whether the law was a vehicle for a genuine agrarian reform or just a sop to domestic and foreign pressure.⁹ Certainly the goals of the law were ambitious enough: (1) to better the socioeconomic conditions of peasants; (2) to conserve natural resources; (3) to promote an increase in the productivity of the land; (4) to prevent the concentration of land in the hands of those who would use it for speculative purposes; (5) to support the development of small and medium size farms; (6) to avoid the creation of *minifundios*; and (7) to promote cooperatives. Critics have argued, however, that even in the unlikely event that all of these goals were eventually met, the peasantry would not find relief. It has been pointed out that what the bulk of the Costa Rican peasants needed was land, and the new law was written in such a way as to almost guarantee that this need would go largely unfulfilled. In the words of a recent subdirector of the agrarian reform institute, Carlos Quintana Ruiz, "The ITCO law is not a law of agrarian reform."¹⁰

The key to understanding criticism of the law lies in the area of compensation for expropriation. The law places heavy emphasis on "respect for private property." It does so for two reasons. First, the legislators wanted to do all they could to prevent peasants from interpreting the new law as an open invitation for further land invasions. It was felt that, unless the law contained a strong statement supporting private property, massive squatting would result. In fact, despite the legislators' efforts, incidents of squatting apparently increased after the law went into effect. The second reason for the emphasis on respect for private property is much more important and lies at the heart of the controversy over the law. The law provides for *prior* full compensation for expropriated land, based on the value of the property as declared by the owner for tax purposes. Hence, the extent of the expropriations (and consequently the scope of the entire agrarian reform) became directly and inexorably tied to the financial ability of the state. Funds had to be found to pay the owner in full for his property, or bonds had to be issued in lieu of payment; either way, each expropriation had a direct impact on national indebtedness. In a country like Costa Rica, which relies on the export of agricultural commodities for the greatest share of its income, the state's capacity to absorb debts is quite limited. Hence, the scope of the reform program, despite the best intentions of those whose job it was to effectuate it, was severely restricted. The evidence to support this statement can be found by examining the achievements of the *Instituto de Tierras y Colonización* (The Lands and Colonization Institute or ITCO), which was established in November 1962, as the bureaucratic apparatus for the execution of the law.

Achievements of the Program: Land Distribution and Titling

What has ITCO accomplished in the years since its founding? The Institute went through several stages in its evolution, each with its own defining characteristics. The first of these phases was highlighted by an emphasis on colonization schemes. The object of these projects was to settle substantial numbers of landless

⁸George W. Hill, "The Agrarian Reform in Costa Rica," *Economics* 40 (February 1964): 41-48.

⁹Edmundo Flores, *Land Reform and the Alliance for Progress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, Center for International Studies, 1963), pp. 8-9.

¹⁰"Diez años del ITCO," Supplement to *La Nación* (San José), 29 October 1972, p. 23.

peasants on virgin lands. Given the limited financial resources of the Institute and its desire to benefit the largest possible number of peasants, it was felt that only by buying land in remote areas would there be sufficient funds to permit the purchase of any sizable plots. In total, 1,272 peasant families were located on 11 colonies, with a total of 35,412 hectares among them.

Superficially the colonization idea seemed a good one. There were, however, extraordinarily high hidden costs in the colonization scheme which eventually limited its success. The Institute did not fully appreciate the fact that for a peasant to make a go of things he had to have more than a plot of land and his two hands. Roads, more than anything else, were essential; roads make it possible to obtain seed, fertilizer, and tools for the production of crops and also provide access to markets once the crop has been harvested. Roads also permit the sick to be transported to hospitals and agricultural agents (*extensionistas*) to visit the farms and provide technical advice. When most of the ITCO colonies were established, they had neither external roads, linking them to the outside world, nor internal roads, linking one farmer to his neighbor. The regions chosen for the colonies were often so remote that even 15 years after their establishment some still did not have all-weather roads connecting them to the outside world. It is not surprising that 32 percent of the colonists interviewed in April-June 1976 responded that roads were their most pressing problem.¹¹ Although ITCO wanted to provide roads in these areas, it did not have the resources with which to do so. Road construction in Costa Rica is an extraordinarily expensive affair, given the uneven nature of the terrain and the extremely high rainfall. Problems of drainage and landslides are difficult to overcome without a large investment in machinery and materials.

Roads, however, were not the only unanticipated cost in the colonization scheme. Other kinds of infrastructure projects were needed as well: houses had to be erected for the colonists, and water systems had to be installed. In the 1976 survey referred to above, in which 32 percent of the colonists responded that bad roads were their major problem, an additional 16 percent said that the absence of a potable water system was their central problem, and an additional 12 percent said the absence of bridges was their major concern. ITCO argued that other government agencies responsible for such specific needs as housing and potable water should take over these projects. These agencies replied, however, that the colonies were ITCO projects and that they were, therefore, ITCO's responsibility. The same reply was often heard from the Ministry of Public Works (*Ministerio de Obras Públicas*) when it came to the establishment of roads linking the colonies to the nearest town. As a result, ITCO, the agrarian reform agency, was saddled with the responsibility of building roads, houses, and water systems.

All in all, the colonization program was not particularly successful. In 1966 the final two colonies were established. The 11 extant colonies went through some very rocky times, and in some cases large numbers of colonists abandoned their farms. In the 1970s, however, as national development proceeded, many of these remote areas were finally linked to the national highway system, and crops began to be harvested and sold. Some colonies even produced large profits. It was generally agreed, however, that the overall costs of the colonization program were too great to make it a viable scheme.

By late 1966 serious reexamination of ITCO's programs was underway. It was clear by this time that the colonization program was too expensive for the Insti-

¹¹These data come from a study conducted by the author and Elena A. Wachong with the assistance of ITCO and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Total sample: N = 753, of which 303 were colonists.

tute to maintain. Further expansion was impossible. Institute officials began searching for a new role that would be compatible with its economic situation. By default, perhaps, the settlement of squatter conflicts became the only activity which the Institute was able to pursue.

From the first days of its establishment ITCO began receiving requests from peasants and large landlords alike to intervene in and resolve squatter conflicts. The 1961 law emphasized this aspect of the program, since squatting conflicts were a source of considerable tension in the nation. The landowners demanded eviction or compensation; the squatters steadfastly refused to be evicted. In addition, a large number of squatting conflicts developed on public domain land. In the years from 1966 to 1969 ITCO dedicated itself to the resolution of these conflicts. The cost to the Institute was minimal, since all that was required was the utilization of the legal and administrative staff that ITCO already had on its payroll. Capital expenditures were largely unnecessary.

The program met with some success. In 1966, the year the project began, only 79 titles were granted. In 1967 the number rose to 303 and in 1968 to 705. In that year an additional 217 titles were given to individuals in the colonization program. In 1969, the last year of this phase, a total of 747 titles were granted, plus an additional 42 titles for the colonists. The entire four-year period saw the granting of 2,093 titles, compared to only 224 titles in the previous four years.

Despite some success in the titling program, however, the overall effort was misdirected because the program sought to deal with the consequences of inequality in land distribution rather than its cause; that is to say, rather than attempting to restructure land distribution in Costa Rica in order to avoid squatting conflicts, the program attempted to resolve the conflicts that had already occurred. It became evident that such a program was not acceptable either to the peasants or to the government. The peasants wanted land and preferred, if at all possible, to get it legally without the risks involved in squatting. The government, in turn, generally sought to avoid rural unrest brought about by the demands for land made by landless peasants. ITCO recognized the need for new efforts that would not only resolve existing conflicts but also avoid new ones whenever possible. This recognition brought about the next phase in the development of the Institute, the one adhered to in the 1970s.

Two types of projects were developed under the new program: the "self-run communal enterprise program" (*empresas comunitarias de autogestión*) and the individual parcel program. The communal enterprise model is based upon ITCO's own experience with it and similar programs in other Latin American countries, such as Colombia, Honduras, and Panama.¹² Essentially, the difference between the individual parcel program and the communal enterprise is that under the former system the land is given in parcels to individuals, while under the latter the land is owned and worked in common, there being no individual plots. Common land is viewed as of critical importance to the project's success. In the individual plot reform program each peasant works on his own parcel of land and has little reason to be concerned with the other participants in the project. Since no one peasant alone has sufficient capital to convert his plot into a modern, efficient farm, the entire reform program often turns out to be highly inefficient. Inasmuch as the only inexpensive source of extra labor under these reform programs is fam-

¹²José Emilio G. Araujo, *La empresa comunitaria: una sistemática reformista en el proceso agrario latinoamericano* (San José: Interamerican Institute of Agricultural Sciences, 1975); Programa de Capacitación Campesina para la Reforma Agraria (PROCCARA), *Las empresas asociativas campesinas* (Tegucigalpa: PROCCARA, 1975).

ily labor, there is a strong incentive to have large families. The communal enterprise, in contrast, operates all land in common and therefore can potentially become an efficient operation with a relatively high level of capital investment and technology. In this sort of operation family labor is replaced by communal labor on the part of members and by mechanization (made possible by greater capital investment).

Both types of reform programs have been experimented with in recent years. The communal program was emphasized in the period 1970-74, when funds for land reform were quite limited. With the election in 1974 of a new President (Daniel Oduber), who supported land reform, new funds became available, and the parcel program received greater emphasis. Both of these programs generally avoided remote locations for projects, but instead expropriated farms in well-developed sections of the country in order to help insure their economic success. ITCO is presently attempting to determine which of the two programs is more effective.

Reform in the 1970s has moved ahead with much greater speed than in the last decade. By 1976 there were 50 reform projects in various stages of completion, including 4,186 families or an estimated 27,000 persons (2.4 percent of the rural population), settled on 87,244 hectares, or 3 percent of the total area of the country dedicated to farming. An indication of the increasing pace of reform is given by the fact that 64 percent of all the families benefited by reform projects since 1962 were settled between 1975 and 1977.¹³ ITCO hopes to become even more responsive to peasant demands in the future. The present plan is to settle 4,500 additional families on 63,000 hectares of land by 1980. This plan means that considerably more families would be settled in the next few years than ITCO settled in its first 14 years. The long-range plan is for settling 30,000 families on 420,000 hectares;¹⁴ over 187,000 hectares of land have already been obtained to meet this goal.¹⁵

Another ITCO project which has been implemented under the new program is directed at the untitled landholders. It will be recalled that a large number of landowning peasants in Costa Rica do not hold legal title to their property. Untitled ownership creates serious difficulties for the peasant when he attempts to obtain bank credit and also induces feelings of insecurity. As a result, ITCO has been attempting to deal with this problem by employing modernized and highly efficient titling procedures in order to reduce the magnitude of the problem as rapidly as possible. The program has been made possible by U.S. foreign aid loans.

ITCO estimates that 45,000 of the 81,562 farms in the country (1973 figures) are untitled. Of these untitled farms about half (some 20,000-25,000) are concentrated in eight zones (Nicoya, Santa Cruz, Cañas, Upala, Puriscal-Parrita, Providencia, Valle de General, and Coto Brus). The others are widely scattered and are not amenable to rapid titling programs (which rely on aerial photography). ITCO's goal is to title the farms in these eight zones in the shortest possible time. By 1976, 11,306 titles had been granted, covering an area of 179,893 hectares, or

¹³José Manuel N. Salazar, Ennio Rodríguez, and José Manuel Salazar, "An Innovating Agrarian Policy: The Case of Costa Rica" (Paper delivered at the International Seminar on Agrarian Reform and Institutional Innovation in the Reconstruction and Development of Agriculture: Major Issues in Perspective, Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 14-22 July 1977). A Spanish version of this paper appears in *Estudios sociales centroamericanos* 20 (May-August 1978): 47-110.

¹⁴*La Nación* (San José), 2 June 1975, p. 17a.

¹⁵Salazar et al., "An Innovating Agrarian Policy."

14 percent of the total area to be titled in these zones. The program is moving ahead quickly and should come close to meeting its set goal.

The Impact of Reform on Peasant Attitudes

It has been shown that in the 1970s ITCO has made intensive efforts to revitalize what had become a stagnant reform program. What has been the impact of the reform on those peasants who have benefited from the reform program?

From the standpoint of research design it is not a simple matter to measure changes in attitudinal shifts in a population and to determine the causes of the shifts. Perhaps for this reason there is an absence of research on the attitudinal impacts of agrarian reform. At first glance it would appear that a "before-and-after" panel design would be ideal, since one could interview peasants prior to and then some time after receiving land. There are two practical difficulties with this approach, however. First, since it is usually impossible to know with any degree of certainty who the beneficiaries of agrarian reform are going to be, it is impossible to design a sample which would be certain to contain a fairly large number of individuals who would later benefit from reform. One way out of this dilemma would be to interview peasants whom the government has designated as future recipients but who have not yet received land. However, the responses from such a sample would be "contaminated" since, in Costa Rica at least, peasants who want land must make a formal application for it and therefore would be aware that they are candidates for assistance. The second difficulty with the before-and-after design is the problem of keeping tabs on members of the survey panel several years after the initial interview. Whereas in urban areas individuals are identifiable by house, street, and telephone numbers, in the countryside these identification aids are absent. Consequently, the attrition rate of the panel resulting from difficulties in locating the respondents is likely to be very high.

Given the problems with the panel design approach, a modified before-and-after design is used in this paper. Rather than interview the individuals at two points in time (before and after receiving land), I have interviewed two samples of peasants in Costa Rica, one landless and the other beneficiaries of agrarian reform. It cannot be proven definitively that agrarian reform is responsible for shifts in attitudes, since even if one were reinterviewing the same individuals one could not be certain which factors caused shifts in attitudes. In the present investigation, however, the consistency of the shifts of opinion and the absence of any known confounding factors which might have been responsible for the shifts increase one's confidence in attributing them to the impact of reform.

Two pieces of evidence tend to indicate that the primary difference between the two samples is related to the impact of reform rather than to any other factors. First, in terms of background characteristics the two samples are quite similar. Educationally the two samples are indistinguishable, both having a mean of 2.8 years of education. All respondents in both samples were born in rural Costa Rica, and no more than 15 percent of either sample had ever spent a year or more in an urban area. In terms of marital status the samples are also nearly identical: only 15 percent of the landless sample and 14 percent of the reform sample are bachelors. The ages of the two samples are also nearly identical, the landless having a mean age of 42.5 and the reform of 43.5.

The second factor which helps demonstrate that reform is the major determinant of the attitudinal shifts comes from examining the impact of attitude changes over time. It can be hypothesized that if the reform helps shift attitudes, individuals who have been in a reform project for several years should demonstrate a

greater shift in attitudes from those who have only recently joined. While the relationship should not be expected to be linear (since there are probably thresholds and/or upper limits of attitude shifts), a positive association between attitude changes and length of residence in the reform project should be detected. In fact, this is precisely what is found. While the correlations are not particularly strong, they are statistically significant and in the predicted direction.

The first survey, conducted in 1973, included 263 landless peasants among the total sample of 531. The second study, with an N of 753, was conducted in 1976 and included only peasants in ITCO projects (colonies, communal enterprises, and parcelization programs). A look at shifts in social-psychological attitudes can help us see what happens to peasants once they have been given land. Tables 1 to 4 compare the attitudes of the sample of 753 peasants who have received land from ITCO with the sample of 263 landless peasants.

The attitudinal impact of reform is striking. The data reveal that those peasants who have received land from ITCO feel significantly more trusting in government, more positively oriented towards the future, and more politically efficacious than do landless peasants, who feel more cynical, more pessimistic about the future, and more powerless than do the ITCO peasants.

The ITCO peasants' greater trust in government is revealed in table 1. For each of the seven questions listed the ITCO peasants responded more frequently with a trusting response than did the more cynical landless peasants, although in two cases the results are not statistically significant. The pattern of responses for the individual questions in table 1 is highly revealing. The strongest differences of opinion between the landless peasants and reform peasants occur in the first four questions, in which the respondent is asked to evaluate the performance of government and government officials. It is readily comprehensible that peasants who have been given land by ITCO would feel, at least in one instance, that government is doing a respectable job. Hence, we find that more than twice as many reform peasants think that the government helps them and that, conversely, nearly three times as many landless peasants think the government hurts them (question 1). In similar fashion, the ITCO peasants are nearly twice as likely to trust government to do the right thing, whereas landless peasants are nearly twice as likely to believe that government almost never can be trusted to do the right thing (question 2). We also find that 25 percent more of the ITCO peasants believe that government is interested in people like them than do the landless peasants (question 3). While the bulk of both groups of peasants feel that public servants are prepared for their jobs, more than twice as many landless peasants feel that the public servants are unprepared (question 4).

The remaining trust in government questions (questions 5-7) ask the peasant to make evaluations that largely go beyond his own personal experience. It is in this area that the trust levels of the two groups are much more similar. Hence, when asked if government is interested in solving the problems of the majority of Costa Ricans or if it is interested only in the problems of some important families, the reform peasants were only slightly more willing to state that government was interested in the majority than were the landless peasants (question 5). Similarly, there is no statistically significant difference between the landless and reform peasants in their view of governmental misspending of tax money (question 6), and no statistically significant difference in their view concerning the honesty of public officials. However, the overall pattern of the responses to the trust questions is clear; peasants who have received land from ITCO are much more favorable in their evaluation of government performance than are landless peasants,

TABLE 1
TRUST IN GOVERNMENT COMPARISONS
(Percentages)

	LANDLESS PEASANTS (N = 263)	REFORM PEASANTS (N = 753)
1. Do you think that what government does helps you, hurts you, or neither helps nor hurts you?		
Helps	20.2	40.5
Neither	43.3	46.9
Hurts	36.5	12.6
	p < .001 Tau c = -.32	
2. How often do you think that one can trust government to do the right thing? Do you think you can trust them almost always, almost never, or sometimes?		
Almost always or sometimes	35.7	65.0
Almost never	64.3	35.0
	p = < .001 Tau b = -.29	
3. Some say that government isn't interested in the problems of people like you. Others say that government is interested in the problems of people like you. What do you think?		
Interested	46.1	71.5
Not interested	53.9	28.5
	p < .001 Tau b = -.26	
4. Do you think that among public servants the majority do not have the preparation necessary for their job, or the majority does have the preparation, or there are some who do and some who do not have the preparation?		
Majority prepared or some prepared	73.0	89.2
Majority unprepared	27.0	10.8
	p < .001 Tau b = -.21	
5. Would you say that government is interested in solving the problems of the majority of Costa Ricans, or are they interested only in the problems of some important families?		
Majority	36.3	45.9
Important families	63.7	54.1
	p < .01 Tau b = -.09	
6. Would you say that government misspends a lot of the money that the people pay in taxes, a little of the money, or part of that money?		
A lot	60.2	58.4
Some	17.7	28.3
Little	17.7	8.4
None	4.4	4.9
	p = ns	
7. Do you think that among public servants there are many who aren't honest, there are some who aren't honest, or there are a few who aren't honest?		
Few or some dishonest	66.7	69.3
Majority dishonest	33.3	30.7
	p = ns	

NOTE: All tables include questions directly comparable in the two surveys. Percentages are based on non-missing data only. Total N varies due to missing data.

especially when the peasants are reporting on their own personal experience with government.

Researchers frequently view peasants as characterized by political incapacity:¹⁶ that is, they are considered to be unable to organize their communities for effective political action. While I have argued that this characterization is an inaccurate one¹⁷ and that peasants do have a higher sense of efficacy than is generally believed, of interest in the present analysis is a comparison of levels of efficacy within the peasant sector. Sharp differences appear between the landless and reform peasants, as is revealed in tables 2 and 3. In these two tables efficacy is measured in two different ways, and both measurements offer identical conclusions.

TABLE 2
POLITICAL EFFICACY I COMPARISONS
(Percentages)

	LANDLESS PEASANTS (N = 263)	REFORM PEASANTS (N = 753)
1. All communities have problems, that is, things which make people's lives difficult. What is the most serious problem in this village, that is, the village of (name filled in)?		
Problem mentioned	55.5	85.7
No problem	44.5	14.3
	p < .001 Tau b = -.33	
2. In your opinion, how did this problem arise?		
Answer	53.2	80.7
Unable to answer	46.8	19.3
	p < .001 Tau b = -.29	
3. What could be done about this problem?		
Answer	49.0	75.6
No answer	51.0	24.4
	p < .001 Tau b = -.27	
4. Have you tried to help solve the problem?		
Yes, helped solve	25.5	49.4
No, not helped solve	74.5	50.1
	p < .001 Tau b = -.25	

¹⁶Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis*.

¹⁷Mitchell A. Seligson and John A. Booth, "Structure and Levels of Political Participation in Costa Rica: Comparing the Countryside with the City," in *Political Participation in Latin America*, vol. 2: *Politics and the Poor*, ed. Seligson and Booth (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); Booth and Seligson, "Images of Participation in Latin America," in *Political Participation in Latin America*, vol. 1: *Citizen and State*, ed. Booth and Seligson (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978); Booth and Seligson, "Peasants as Activists: A Reevaluation of Political Participation in the Countryside," *Comparative Political Studies* (in press).

TABLE 3
POLITICAL EFFICACY II COMPARISONS
(Percentages)

	LANDLESS PEASANTS (N = 263)	REFORM PEASANTS (N = 753)
1. Let's suppose that a municipal law is being considered which you consider unjust and harmful to your community. What do you think you could do about this?		
Do something (protest, strike, etc.)	50.6	82.6
Do nothing	49.4	17.4
	p < .001 Tau b = -.25	
2. If a group of neighbors made an effort to stop the law, what chance would you have to stop it? Would you have a good chance, a fair chance, or a poor chance?		
Good chance	40.6	75.0
Fair chance	34.5	20.7
Poor chance	24.9	4.3
	p < .001 Tau c = -.38	
3. Let's suppose that there were a matter that you had to arrange in one of the offices of the government. If you tried to explain your problem to the people of that office, do you think they would pay you a lot of attention, a little attention, or wouldn't pay attention to you?		
Lot of attention	16.5	56.5
Little attention	65.5	38.0
No attention	18.0	5.5
	p < .001 Tau c = -.43	

Efficacy is measured in table 2 by a series of questions regarding problems and problem-solving in the respondent's village.¹⁸ The first question in table 2 demonstrates that, while over 55 percent of the landless peasants can name what they consider to be the most serious problem in their village, over 85 percent of the ITCO peasants are able to do so. The responses to the remaining questions in table 2 reveal similar differences between the two samples. The ITCO peasants are much more informed about how the problem arose (question 2), and how it could be solved (question 3). They have also been more actively involved in solving the problem (question 4) than have the landless peasants. It can be concluded that reform peasants have a significantly higher feeling of political efficacy than do landless peasants. Communities composed of reform peasants, therefore, are much

¹⁸The questions in this table form a valid Guttman scale; for further details on this method of measuring efficacy, see Seligson, "Unconventional Political Participation: Cynicism, Powerlessness, and the Latin American Peasant," in *Political Participation*, vol. 2, ed. Seligson and Booth.

more likely to be active in trying to solve local problems. Consequently, greater communal activism in such communities can be expected. In contrast, communities populated by landless peasants are more frequently willing to "let the other guy worry about it."

The second measure of political efficacy is detailed in table 3. This measure is made up of questions which probe the respondent's sense of efficacy in relation to government institutions. The first question asks for his feelings of efficacy toward the local government (i.e., *municipalidad*). The respondent is asked what he would do if the municipality considered passing a law which he considered unjust. The majority of both groups of peasants feel that they would do something about the law; however, 49 percent of the landless peasants but only a little over 17 percent of the ITCO peasants say they would do nothing (question 1). Similarly, the reform peasants are much more optimistic that efforts on the part of the community to stop the law will be successful; only 4.3 percent of the reform peasants feel that they will have a poor chance of stopping the law as compared to 24.9 percent of the landless peasants who reacted this way. The last question in this series asks the peasant to speculate about how he would be treated in a government office. Here we see that the ITCO peasants' contact with government institutions has apparently been considerably more satisfactory than that of the landless peasants. Over half of the ITCO peasants but less than one-fifth of the landless peasants feel that they would receive a lot of attention in the government office. It is clear from the responses to these questions that reform peasants feel considerably more capable of having an impact on government bureaucracies than do landless peasants.

The final series of questions which will be analyzed are those concerning the individual's orientation toward the future. By this it is meant those attitudes which reflect the way in which a respondent reacts to the challenges of a changing world; some are optimistic and believe that they can meet those challenges because man is in control of his destiny, whereas others view the future with despair, for they believe that the future is predetermined.

The questions asked to elicit the future orientation of the two groups of peasants are contained in table 4. Once again we see clear evidence of the impact of agrarian reform. Questions 1 and 2 are phrased in a general way in order to tap underlying attitudes toward the future. The first question reveals that while slightly less than half of the landless peasants believe that one makes his own destiny, over 85 percent of the reform peasants believe so. Similarly, but less strikingly, nearly two-thirds of the landless peasants but only half of the reform peasants feel that success in life depends more on luck than on the individual. The first two general questions serve as a basis for the more specific questions (3, 4, and 5) which posit a particular situation and ask the peasant to respond to it. The responses to the first question, a hypothetical situation regarding the value of making plans, reveal that while slightly under half of the landless peasants consider it is useless to make plans, less than a fifth of the ITCO peasants felt plans are useless. The next question in this series (question 4) demonstrates that nearly three times as many landless peasants than do ITCO peasants believe that planting methods should remain unchanged. The final question (question 5) demonstrates that the landless peasants are more likely than the reform peasants to rely on religion rather than on medicine in curing an illness. All of the questions in this series indicate a much more positive approach to the future among reform peasants.

TABLE 4
FUTURE ORIENTATION COMPARISONS
(Percentages)

	LANDLESS PEASANTS (N = 263)	REFORM PEASANTS (N = 753)
1. Some say that one is born with his destiny; others say that one makes his own destiny. What do you think?		
Make destiny	48.6	85.5
Born with destiny	51.4	14.5
	p < .001 Tau b = -.39	
2. Some say that success in life depends more on luck than on the individual. Others say, on the other hand, that success in life depends more on the individual than on luck. On what does it depend upon more?		
The individual	34.5	49.8
Luck	65.5	50.2
	p < .001 Tau b = -.15	
3. Two men are talking about the bad luck a friend of theirs had. This friend, in spite of making plans to improve his farm's production, had failed. One of the two men said, "It's better not to make plans because most of the time plans go up in smoke." But the other man was not in agreement and said, "To make plans is very important." Which of the two do you think is right?		
Important to make plans	53.6	83.9
Useless to make plans	46.4	16.8
	p < .001 Tau b = -.32	
4. Two farmers are talking about how they could work it to get a bigger coffee harvest. One farmer said, "We ought to change our way of cultivating coffee." The other responds, "I disagree. We ought to continue as before." What do you think?		
Change method	70.7	89.9
Continue as before	29.3	10.1
	p < .001 Tau b = -.24	
5. A man's wife is gravely ill. What should he do? Get the medicine first and afterwards pray to God, or should he pray to God first and afterwards get the medicine?		
Medicine	40.2	61.7
Pray	59.8	38.3
	p < .001 Tau b = -.22	

Conclusions

Agrarian reform in Costa Rica has come a long way since 1942. ITCO has recognized many of its mistakes and is driving toward a more effective program. Furthermore, the pace of reform has quickened. Perhaps even more important is that there is strong evidence of the beneficial impact of reform; peasant attitudes are much more positive. It is unclear at the time that this paper is being written (February 1978), however, whether the momentum of the past few years will be sus-

tained. In the presidential election of 4 February 1978 the party which had been in power since 1970 and which had provided extensive support to the reform program between 1974 and 1978 was turned out of office by the electorate. It is too early to tell what impact this change of government will have on land reform.

The evidence presented in the paper should strongly encourage governments contemplating agrarian reform to go ahead with their programs. It should also give pause to those in Costa Rica who may be considering a scaling down of the reform efforts of the past few years. Certainly a major preoccupation of governments in developing nations is land-reform policy. In many countries governments should be interested to learn that agrarian reform can help reorient peasant attitudes toward greater political trust, a greater sense of efficacy, and a more positive outlook on the future. It would appear that through reform peasants can become more active, integrated members of society.