

Chapter 8

The OW in Panamá, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Perú¹

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¹ Based on the personal recollections of Clodomir Santos de Morais

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The Agrarian Reform in Panamá

The agrarian reform in Panamá pushed through by [General Torrijos](#)³, after the nationalist coup d'état of 1969, only reached the conflict zones of the country where large estates were expropriated and landless agricultural labourers settled instead. The head of the Panamanian Agrarian Reform Board who became later the minister of agriculture and livestock, Eng. Nilson Espino, adopted the 'Honduran Model' of rural development, which implied large scale land settlements based on collectivist ownership and production. The 280 enterprises of that type banded together in CONAC (National Confederation of Campesino Land Settlements) under the leadership of the agricultural worker Julio Bermudez. In the Capacitation centre in Divisa in the municipality of Penonome, Cocolé Province, and in other locations in the Republic, more than

last decade especially, he has been instrumental in the application of the OW on a regional basis in the poorest part of the country, Chorotega. As Director of ALFA (America Latina Formación Académica) he ran several international initiatives and conferences, a.o. the first international conference on the Organization Workshop in Manchester, UK, in 1998

³ In the late sixties, the then Panamanian General Omar Torrijos Herrera, the de facto ruler of **Panama**, asked for de Moraes' advice on how to make his rule acceptable to the United States of America so as to facilitate the country's negotiations for new Panama Canal Treatise. As de Moraes recounted it himself (to Ivan Labra), the General told him: *"I need my government to be accepted by the people, I need a Parliament that is able to ratify a new Treaty, but if I call for elections, as things stand now, people would fail to vote me in"*. de Moraes reportedly advised him to change the Constitution to allow for a new Parliament, composed of 505 Representatives from the country's 505 counties. "They would then elect you as head of Government" To which Torrijos retorted *"But how do I convince people to accept the new system in the first place?"* As the youth were known to be supportive of the Military, de Moraes then suggested the idea of gathering 1,000 young people into a "Centre" OW, equip them with transport and logistics (from the military) and get them to take the new Constitution to every corner of the country in preparation for the election. (Oral communication personal recollection Ivan Labra)

2,000 learners took part in the Organization 'Centre' Workshop learning events organized by CONAC . The Honduran academics Carlos Tovar and Oscar Leiva Cerrato were respectively Field Workshop(FOW) and Center Course Directors here.

Colombia

The Agronomist Nemesio Porras and Luis Porras, during the eighties, introduced the Large Group Capacitation Method (LGCM) in the Darien, an area near the Colombia border, where they organized a large scale Field OW among the population of the Pacific Coast, in Guarachine, financed by the ILO's PREALC representative (Regional Employment Program for Latin America and the Caribbean), Lic. García Huidobro, and by the representative for the IICA (Interamerican Institute for Agricultural Cooperation) an Organization of the American States (AEA). Also extending a helping hand in the Large Group capacitation effort were the Costaricans of the team of the Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica (UNACR) as well as Iván Labra, who was in Panama at that time. As a result of this Workshop, numerous enterprises, as well as a monthly newspaper were created. Professor in Sociology at the National University of Costa Rica Jorge Mora Alfaro (now – 2000 - Rector at that same University) was the principal initiator of the Large Group OW Capacitation Method (LGCM) in Colombia of the seventies. Afterwards, in the eighties. the Honduran university professors Carlos Tovar and Leivas Cerrato went to conduct several Field OW's in Colombia. In both cases IICA was the sponsoring Institution of the Organizational Workshops in their various forms, conducted

by the two aforementioned academics in different locations in Colombia. When a sufficient number of counterparts of the different Institutions had been formed, the methodology further was disseminated throughout the principal rural and urban areas of the country, in total more than 100 workshops were realized as from 1979, when the National Training Service, SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje - the Agrarian Learning Centre - of the region of Córdoba) made its premises available for the purpose.

The first Organization Workshop in Colombia took place in El Povenir. This was followed by the OWs organized in San Rafael de Cortina, Magangué and Bolívar; there were also the OWs in Carmen de Bolívar, San Jacinto, San Juan and Cartagena from which a number of medium-sized entrepreneurial structures which grouped dress makers, iron-workers, electronic specialists etc, ensued. In all, an estimated 400 Large Group Capacitation OWs were held in Colombia. The workshops were led by teams made up of the following highly competent professionals: Maria Cadena, Rafael Morales Marin, Jesus Martinez Zuñiga, Omar Gonzalez, Raimundo Guardo Puello, Hernan Gonzalez Londoño and Hugo Escobar Melo. Recognition has to be given to the fact that this was the only team which set out to produce the first manual on the OW method, entitled *"Experimental Organizational Workshop. A Methodology for Capacitation and Organization"*. It is a very substantial document of 208 pages published in 1986 by the SENA which offers a fundamental analysis of Clodomir Santos de Morais' Theory of Organization.

Venezuela

Two outstanding Venezuelan Institutes paid great attention to the rural & urban applications of the Large Group OW Capacitation Method in Venezuela, namely the National Agrarian Institute of Venezuela (IAN) and the Foundation for Applied Capacitation and Research for the Agrarian Reform, better known as the CIARA Foundation (Fundación para la Capacitación e Investigación Aplicada a la Reforma Agraria), as well as the Interamerican Institute for Agrarian Cooperation (IICA - see the chapter by Leopoldo Sandoval below)⁴. The Honduran Oscar Leivas Cerrato and the Chilean Ivàn Labra Moya were the principal pioneers in the introduction of the Organization Workshops in Venezuela. However, present at the first International Organization Workshop which took place in 1975 in the famous Capacitation Centre "*David Funez Villatoro*" of Guanchias, municipality of Santa Rita, Department of Yoro, Honduras, were several students from Venezuela, prominent among them the agronomist Orlando Sosa Moreno of the National Agrarian Institute (IAN), Magada Y. and Perozo V. of the CIARA foundation.

At the "Seminar on the Method for the Development of Community Campesino Enterprises and Organizational Workshops" which was organized by the CIARA Foundation in Caracas in 1980, the Interamerican Institute for Agrarian Cooperation (IICA), the Institute for Agrarian Capacitation (INAGRO) and the National Agrarian Institute (IAN), notes and ideas were exchanged on

⁴ Leopoldo is author of Chapter 9 of this book (A Future for the Excluded) – He was minister of Agriculture of Guatemala in 2001, when the 3-month national PRONACAMPO 'Course OW' took place, directed by Clodomir Santos de Moraes and attended by 850 Field workers (API's) and 50 OW Technical Director trainees (TDE's). Leopoldo passed away in 2009.

experiences in the application of the Large Group Capacitation Method in the Central Western, Central, North Eastern and the Andes regions of Venezuela. According to the Seminar Report on the Method for the Development of Community Enterprises and Organization Workshops, published conjointly by IICA, INAGRO, CIARA and IAN, these Institutes allowed 96 OW directors, in all, to be formed who subsequently were actively involved in the running of 286 Workshops from which 11,440 campesinos benefited. It concerned a three-pronged strategy: during the initial stage of the plan, from April 1981 to March 1982, **32** Workshops were organized in which a total of **1,280 participants** took part. During the second stage, **77** Workshops benefited **3,080** persons while a third, again, saw a total of **97** OWs with **3,880** beneficiaries.

During the eighties, just as in the neighbouring Republic of Colombia, a veritable movement promoting the organization of the rural populations around production issues and the generation of employment by means of self managing community structures, spread like wildfire. In some regions in Venezuela where the institutional frameworks were still very backward, 'organization for struggle' was perceived to be the only alternative allowing people to survive in hostile conditions. It was indeed an era very much marked, in both Colombia and Venezuela, by violence in the countryside. It is worth reminding the reader that, back in 1969, the ILO in Geneva, probably exasperated by all the talk about the then '*Social Participation*' neologism -- (in Clodomir's words, a kind of '*gaseous vertebra*'-term, but copiously parroted by the various United Nations Agencies especially from the seventies onward had become the good-sounding leitmotiv and mantra of most their projects) --, had decided to convene in each

continent a symposium in which the idea of '*social participation*' was to be thoroughly discussed in order to make a clean breast of it. Those called by the ILO to the Latin American-continent meeting were 13 sociologists who stood out for their expertise in 'Social Participation' matters. They were the Mexicans Paulo Gonzalez Casanova and Rudolfo Stavenhagen; the Argentineans José Nun and Torquato Di Tella; the Brazilians Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Almino Affonso and Clodomir Santos de Moraes; the Chilean Hugo Semelman, the Colombian Fals Borda, the Peruvian Anibal Quijano, the Haitian Jean Casimir, and the Venezuelan José Michelena.

The symposium spread into an interminable discussion, followed by yet more discussions by correspondence, lasting several months, until the same group met again for yet another five days of hot debates. The upshot was that the specialists, gathered in the Colegio de Mexico, clarified the correct use of '*Social Participation*' parlance, what it was being used for, how, and in what conditions it ought to be used, and also what 'the essence' of the '*Social Participation*' phenomenon was. In the end, the key discussion gravitated around the question as to whether the concept was of any practical use at all, or whether we were not getting lost, yet again, in some academic hall of mirrors. Whatever the case may be, the symposium was an occasion to get to know each other better socially, because the mystification spun around the concept by the United Nations Agencies and the Organization of American States (OEA) was enormous. Notwithstanding that, we had to wait another thirty years before Raff Carmen would call a spade a spade and expose the mystifications (and manipulations) around participation as '*Participulation*'. Among the more

unusual Research Projects at that time, in the wake this scientific 'conclave' was the field work done by Orlando Fals Borda, on *social participation*. . . . in the violence-riddled areas of Colombia, and José Michelena's project called '*social participation in the Venezuelan guerilla movement*'. This only goes to show that even in countries rife with armed conflict it is still possible to disseminate organizational structures based on '*Social Participation*'.

Perú

Perú, under the government of General Alvarado, devised the most radical agrarian reform Latin America has seen this century. With one stroke of the pen, on 14 June 1969, all the great capitalist enterprises along the Peruvian Coast, the majority of which were owned by absent landlords and transnationals, were expropriated. Once the expropriation complete, the State set out to prepare its workers, employees and salaried agricultural labourers for assuming the task of managing those enterprises. In the maelstrom created by the Peruvian Agrarian Reform, however, groups of litigants fell out with each other, among them groups of reformers themselves. In any case, amidst all these conflicts, there was one constant which kept nudging the agrarian reformists towards collaborating with each other, namely, the urgent need to prepare cadres which ought to guarantee the successful outcome of the reform process. The government applied to the FAO for help in setting up, in Lima, of the '*Center for Agrarian Reform Capacitation and Research*'(CENCIRA), while taking a cue from ICIRA (Capacitation and Research Institute for Agrarian Reform), sponsored by the Government of Eduardo Frei in Chile, in the

beginning of the decade.

In contrast with the great contribution to the Chilean Agrarian Reform by the ICIRA, initiated by Frei and later on pursued by Salvador Allende, CENCIRA limited itself to locking up a dozen experts in a room for several years, keeping them sweet with fat international salaries so that they would keep out of the way and not interfere with what the Peruvian Revolution considered to be 'its' agrarian vision, based on collectivist principles ranging all the way from the agro industrial to the industrial sector. Of the entire CENCIRA Project's achievements the government only allowed the audiovisual paraphernalia, -- very '*avant garde*' in those days --, to be used in agricultural training. Ten years on, we see the FAO duplicating the same audiovisual programme in its Mexico Project. Because of its novelty value, the technology spoke to the imagination of Institutions while the gist was being overlooked, ie *the need for entrepreneurial capacitation in modes of self management*.

The Super 8'-films fashion and CCTV (Closed circuit TV) about which there had been so much noise was being made just then in the context of Space Shuttle flight simulators, was then the flavour of the month. As epilogue to this period suffice it to mention a proliferation of campesino training workshops in the use of audiovisual systems and the simultaneous erection, in some communities, of so-called '*Communication Centres*' which usually consisted of a number of loudspeakers, musical centres, and the dissemination of local news provided by means of the amplification systems put at their disposal and which usually were stored in a small office which also had to serve as the Women's

regular meeting place. It was not until 1971, when Colonel Basurto, Director in Chief of the National Institute for Cooperativism, inspired by the Gerardo Cardenas Falcon model, accepted the project as proposed by Clodomir Santos de Moraes, acting on behalf of the ILO and financed by the Special Fund of the United Nations which specialised in the formation of specialist cadres in knowledge and skills of self management so that, at long last, the institutional conditions for the application of the methodology, so long postponed in the Peruvian agrarian reform, could be realized. Unfortunately, by the time this project had been approved by the UN Fund, Clodomir Santos de Moraes had already been appointed Director of an identical project in Honduras, namely the PROCARRA programme (see chapter 6 of this book).

The solution adopted by Geneva (ILO) was to name the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro as director of the Peruvian project, also known now as 'Project SINAMOS' (National System of Social Mobilization). His counterpart was the famous anthropologist Carlos Delgado. In the end, the SINAMOS project limited itself to '*critical consciousness-raising*' projects among the rural producers, without introducing them to the necessary '*organizational consciousness*', too, the only way in which the efficient operation of the gigantic enterprises in the Andean Cordillera, run by the former day labourers, could be assured. Neither did SINAMOS take advantage of the opportunity to foster organizational structures inside INCA PLAN which, (em)-powered by the radical Agrarian Reform Law, constituted the political and ideological backbone of the Peruvian military's revolutionary discourse of that time. That is how, when retrograde forces in the Peruvian army organized a coup against the

government of general Alvarado, there was neither a party structure, nor a national structure for national social participation sufficiently firmly rooted - (as might have been the case) - in thousands of distinct forms of self management, capable of defending the achievements for which the government of Alvarado had taken the responsibility. The consequences, therefore, were very grave. The first thing the right, once in the seat of power, did, was to dismantle the advances made by General Alvarado's Agrarian Reform and return the expropriated farms transferred to the workers, back to their former owners.

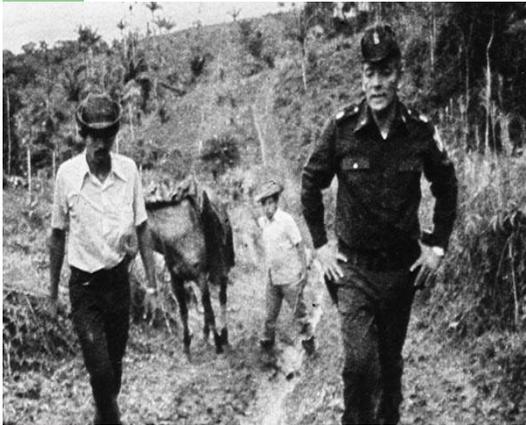
We cannot even say that the socialist Agrarian Reform had been cut short. The Agrarian Reform, once destined to change the history of the Peruvian economy, had hardly taken place at all. What did happen was that the former owners had been compensated for the expropriated properties who, thereby, received massive bonus payments, monies which they then were able to use to set up new enterprises, industrial sites, or service industries this time. This means that the government had paid them for the import of machinery and back-up credit to finance their new industries. What it all amounted to, in the end, was that, what went under the name of agrarian reform consisted of no more than the transfer of agricultural capital to the industrial or service sector. The lack of a properly organized popular base, be it in the Peruvian Revolutionary Party (which SINAMOS never aspired to nor had the permission to) or of a great national system of Participatory Self managing Enterprises, meant that it was not difficult for the right to engineer the total collapse of the Revolution and the agrarian Reform of General Alvarado. The broad masses of rural and urban producers found themselves therefore orphaned, abandoned and frustrated while

hunger devastated the hundreds of thousands, even millions of ex-beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform. This resulted in a large void in Peruvian society, which, after ten years, was overrun by militaristic rural movements of urban inspiration such as the '*Sendero Luminoso*' or the '*Tupacamaru*'.

The Peruvian Institutional framework, as from the fall of general Alvarado in 1976, became therefore very thinly based and the great masses of the disherited in the countryside and in the miserable slums of Lima remained without any organizational perspectives whatsoever. Since then, the ALEA (Latinamerican Association of Self managing Enterprises) was created in Lima which managed to realize, in 1980, in the town of San José de Costa Rica, the first Continental meeting, with the financial and political backing of the IICA (an OEA organization). At this occasion a Board of Directors was elected, with among them the Self management practitioner William Moreno from Peru and the Brazilian Joaquin Lisboa Neto who had learned the skill of directing the Organization Field Workshops with Nemesio Porras Medieta in Nicaragua. The application of this methodology made Joaquin Lisboa Neto into the founder of the Self managing Enterprise Association, the ADERI (Association for Integrated Rural Development) in Santa Maria de Victoria, in the state of Bahía. William Moreno, meanwhile, became the head of the ALEA with its headquarters in Lima, responsible for the formation of many cadres, directors of Organization Workshops and initiator of hundreds of events of this type, notwithstanding the institutional limitations imposed by a government hostile to popular movements. Thus it was possible to generate hundreds of new selfmanaging enterprises in Peru and the way was opened to the generation of

workplaces and income generation benefiting the excluded of the countryside and in Peru's towns.

PANAMA – Centre O.W.s 1960's



1969: Panama Leader Omar Torrijos with Panamanian farmers

Post -1969 coup, Omar Torrijos built a popular base in Panama from the ranks of the National Guard, which was composed mostly of provincial black and lower- or middle-class mestizos like Torrijos himself, as well as an assortment of campesinos and urban workers. Torrijos fostered public works and agrarian reform and put the National Guard to work on programs to improve conditions in rural areas and to bring the poorer classes to power. Clodomir directs a large Centre O.W. in 1969

PANAMA Centre O.W. (ctd)

- Location of the Centre O.W.: Teacher Training school in City of Santiago, Panama
- From this centre the youth leaders would spread out to the entire country, free from the control of the military, international experts, or ngo's, and start Field O.W.s
- The success of this Centre O.W. gave rise to the development of the Course O.W.

PANAMA Centre O.W. (4)



T.Training School Santiago Panama

The success of the Panama Centre O.W. initiative gave rise to the development of the **Course O.W.** later on (Correia)
(see Course O.W. PPoints)