

# LOCAL POLITICS IN SYRIA: ORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION IN FOUR VILLAGE CASES

*Raymond A. Hinnebusch*

**B**A'TH Party leaders in Syria have tried to create what has been called a "mobilization system." This is a single party régime aiming to extend its organizational apparatus into the "mass base" of society to mobilize participation and support for its rule and its goals.<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Leninist models and the peasant revolutions in Vietnam and Algeria, the Ba'th élite realized that power cannot be stabilized or a revolution made simply by seizing the political center, unless the "revolutionary writ" can be made to run far into mass society. To carry out the rapid, extensive, but controlled social and political change at which they aimed, Ba'th leaders believed that they could not depend on bureaucracy to impose it "from above" nor work through traditional local influentials to spread it "from below." It was necessary to combine goal setting from above and mobilized mass support and participation from below. This would be done by building party and mass political organizations as a new form of political linkage extending between the revolutionary élite and the masses in their villages and neighborhoods. In this way, policies conceived at the center could be made meaningful for persons in the countryside, and power mobilized and channeled at the base of society. More concretely, mass attachments to the party's traditional opponents could be weakened, and legitimacy generated for the new régime. Peasants could be drawn into national political life, be brought to identify with nationalist goals, and enlisted in the effort at social reorganization in the countryside.<sup>2</sup>

This study will explore the organizational and mobilizational performance of the Syrian Ba'th régime by focusing on the local level linkage which

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1. The "Mobilization System" as a prototypical model for political development is discussed in David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, Chicago, 1965, pp. 1-42, 357-90.

2. The central ideological text on Ba'thi organization and mobilization is the section on "Popular Democracy" in *Some Theoretical Points of Departure* (National Command, Damascus, 1972). Ba'thist goals and policy in the countryside are reflected in various party manuals for members such as *al-Hizb wa al-musala al-zirā'iyya* (The Party and the Agrarian Question); *al-Taḥwīl al-Ishtirākīyya fī al-rīf* (Socialist Transformation in the Countryside); and an interesting booklet by Muhammed Fāyīz al-Tal, *al-Mujtama' al-'Arabī al-Sūrī fī al-Dawla al-Ḥadīth* (Syrian Arab Society in the New State).

△ RAYMOND A. HINNEBUSCH, a political scientist teaching at the University of Pittsburgh, did field research in Syria in 1973-74.

constitutes the critical key to mass mobilization many would-be revolutionary régimes often fail to find. This will be done by sketching a general ideal-typical model of the Syrian system of local mobilization, and then relying on this as a benchmark in the examination and evaluation of four concrete village cases.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Ba'th Model of Local Organization and Mobilization*

Two important dimensions (which may also be taken as requisites of success) of the ideal-typical Ba'th model of mobilization may be identified: 1) the régime drive to penetrate the villages and implant local organizations, and 2) the effort to mobilize through these organizations peasant support for and participation in régime programs.

The first dimension, organizational penetration, is accomplished through the recruitment of leadership cadres from the community, particularly from educated youth who often form the local party leadership, and small and middle peasants who lead the peasant unions. As the party has had a long history of work in the countryside before coming to power at the center, a pool of potential cadres already exists in many villages, but in others organization begins from scratch. Cadres attend party and peasant union schools to be socialized in régime values and goals and to learn organizational methods. They then return to their villages to form the organizational nucleus around which an expanding number of peasants will be mobilized.

The rôle of the local cadre is to function as a nexus through which élite goals and programs are diffused to the masses and local needs passed upward toward the élite. Such a two way channel of communication and services is necessary if some community of interest is to be generated between élites and masses. The local cadre is, ideal-typically, well suited to play this rôle. As the bottom link in the organizational chain stretching from the center, he constitutes the spearhead of régime penetration of its "mass base." He is, in some measure,

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3. This ideal-typical model synthesizes materials derived from a number of sources and methods. The goals and ideal formal structure of the system as elucidated in the régime programs and rules manuals, were taken as a starting point. An attempt was then made, through an analysis of public and internal documents and a program of trips and interviews at all levels of the system, to estimate the typical extent of conformity to or deviation from the ideal norms. Findings remain tentative and definitive conclusions must await more systematic and extensive research. Nevertheless the writer believes, on the basis of semi-systematic research in Syria, that the formal norms are not purely ideal or "on paper only," but are, in a broad sense, more or less approximated in reality.

Some important documents setting out the formal structure of the General Federation of Peasants, which is the focus of this study, include: The Ministry of Information, *The Peasant Union in the Syrian Arab Republic*, Damascus, 1964; Ministère des Affaires Sociales et du Travail, *La Loi de l'Organisation Syndicale Paysanne*, Damascus, 1969; *Nizām al-Dākhilī lil-naqāba al-Falāḥīn*, Damascus, n.d., (Internal Rules of the Peasant Union); *Nizām al-Dākhilī lil-Ittiḥād al-'Am lil-Falāḥīn*, Damascus, 1969, (Internal Rules of the General Federation of Peasants); *Mu'abid al-taqīf al-Falāḥī*, 1973 (Peasant Cultural Institute). Most valuable for insight into the functioning of the organization are the reports of the leadership to Federation Congresses, e.g. *al-M'utamar al-Ittiḥādī lil-Falāḥīn al-Thānī*, (Second Congress of the Peasant Federations), Damascus, 1967. Also useful are the resolutions of the Congresses, such as, *Muqararāt al-M'utamar al-Thālith lil-Ittiḥād al-'Am lil-Falāḥīn*, Damascus, 1970.

oriented to the organization center and its goals through a certain ideological commitment generated in training and reinforced through downward flowing communication and socialization, various forms of organizational supervision and control, and rewards such as opportunities for upward mobility and a political career. But as the cadre is also derived from the local community, continues to work his land as other peasants in the village, and is in time subject to local election and recall, he can also be close to local needs and accountable to local opinion. He can enjoy the confidence and face-to-face diffuse relations necessary to make an impact locally, whether to lead change, make center communications meaningful in a local context, or articulate upward local needs. As such, the cadre is the critical mediating linkage between the center and the local people.

Of course, deviations from this optimal linkage/mediation rôle are possible and, indeed, are recorded in organization documents. For example, some cadres have evidently been heavily motivated by a careerist drive for income, status and power through upward mobility, and have tried to use the local community to fulfill these ambitions. Such a cadre might seek only to please superiors, disregard local needs, and turn himself into a petty official differentiated from the community. Or he might use his access to the center to extort illegal "baksheesh" from locals. In such cases, the cadre is likely to lose the capacity to exercise leadership in the local community, and the system to be in danger of bureaucratization. On the other hand, some cadres appear to be only superficially oriented to the régime's modernizing goals, remain traditional in outlook, and lack the capacity to understand and lead change. Such a cadre may evade center demands, and use public programs to build personal followings or for the exclusive benefit of family or sectarian ingroups. In such a case, the community is likely to be fragmented and the organization to metamorphize into a mere guise for a traditionalistic village faction. In either deviant case, linkage between élites and masses is likely to weaken, and the mobilization of power to be less efficient. The organization documents which report these deviations also report efforts to "rectify" them, and although insufficient evidence is available to permit a confident estimation of their success, the leadership does appear intent on approximating the ideal cadre rôle. It seems most likely that while the ideal norm does have considerable relevance, various shades of deviation are probably to be found in most concrete cases. As modernizing instruments penetrate a society still considerably traditional, they are likely to be in part traditionalized themselves. Further, whatever the ideological and policy intentions of such mobilizational efforts, they are bound to be seriously affected by the diversity of other motivations and attitudes brought to the enterprise by those engaged.

The second important dimension in mass mobilization is the establishment of the leadership status of the cadres in the local community. The peasants

must be attracted to the new organizations and their ties to traditional leaders broken or, at least, superseded.<sup>4</sup> To do this, the cadre must generate among the peasants some identification with régime goals and convince them that coöperation with the régime will be advantageous to them. He must therefore be able to offer the peasants the promise and at least part of the substance of concrete improvement in their conditions. To the extent the new leaders are successful in this, they are then able to mobilize the peasant support and involvement which is indispensable to the implementation of régime reforms and development programs.

The land reform is a good concrete example of a mobilizational technique through which the régime has been able to mobilize peasant support. The land reform had the effect of breaking up the large land holdings which the traditional élites had used as patronage resources to attach peasants to the old order, or as levers to keep the peasants dependent on them. The land reform undermined the resource base of the traditional system while, at the same time, permitting the régime to build support through land distribution. The régime used the reform as a focus around which to begin the organization of the peasant union. It then became possible to activate both the party and the fledgling unions as valuable tools for involving the peasants in reform implementation. After years of attempts to carry out the reform bureaucratically (from above) had made only modest headway, in 1966 distribution powers were decentralized to the local party and peasant unions and after that the reform moved ahead much more quickly.<sup>5</sup>

A second important régime program through which peasant involvement has been engaged is the construction of a new state and coöperative socioeconomic infrastructure to replace the disintegrating traditional system. This new system, along with the land reform, is crucial to the régime's conception of "socialist transformation in the countryside." It has entailed the creation of agricultural coöperatives, the establishment of a system of agrarian relations to regulate investment and protect peasant rights, the building of an infrastructure for credit, production requisite supply, marketing, and the beginnings of a program of agricultural planning, agricultural education and

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4. As such, traditional leaders tend to be excluded from organizations such as the peasant union by rules restricting membership to small peasants who personally work their land.

5. According to Petran: "The modest agrarian reform of 1958 was to have been completed in 1963. However, at the end of 1963, only 17% of the land subject to expropriation had been distributed . . . . The serious attempt to carry out the reform, which began . . . in 1965, succeeded by 1970 in completing expropriation of all land subject to expropriation. And, by the end of 1971, 85% of the expropriated land had been distributed." Tabitha Petran, *Syria*, London, 1972, p. 205.

Useful as a review of the implementation of the agrarian reform are various documents such as Ahmad M. al-Zubi, *et al.*, *The Question of Agrarian Reform Through Legislation and Action in the Syrian Arab Republic*, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and Syndicate of Agricultural Engineers, Damascus, Syria, 1969; R. T. Ratnatunga, *Report on Land Tenure, Land Settlement and Institutional Considerations*, FAO, Damascus, 1968.

technical assistance. The régime and its local cadres have used these programs to integrate the peasants into and attach peasant interests to the new system of power. The party and peasant unions have functioned as channels through which the régime has funneled its various benefits and services into the villages. They have acted as spokesmen for peasant rights in the agrarian courts, and it is through them that villagers find local mediators with the government bureaucracies in the district and national capitals.

At the same time, the mobilization of peasant support and involvement has been indispensable to the success of the system. By activating peasant "self-management" in the administration of parts of the program, and peasant "popular control" on the service bureaucracies involved, the program can go forward without creation of a costly new bureaucracy, and local peasant organs can become centers of leadership and motivation necessary to make the system go. Peasants can be involved because they share with the régime a certain interest in making the system work well. In a similar way, in their rôles as schools for the diffusion of literacy and training, institutions of arbitration and conflict resolution, and foci of local efforts at development, the new organizations serve both élite level goals and local needs.<sup>6</sup>

A third factor which seems to play a rôle in mass mobilization is ideology. The organizations have become centers for the diffusion of régime ideology, which, in conjunction with concrete programs of reform and national level events, has helped engage peasant commitments. The Ba'thist ideology with its blend of egalitarianism and nationalism seems a well pitched appeal to Syrian peasants. The invocation of nationalist symbols against a background of Syrian activism in the Arab national cause and outside threats and blows against Syria, appears to tap a deep rooted peasant nationalism.<sup>7</sup> Many peasants are attracted by components of social reform in the ideology which coincide with their own interests. Many younger peasants, less oriented than their elders to tradition, seem to be very receptive to the prospects of modernization evoked by the Ba'th.

6. Various documents give insights into the development of the rural socioeconomic infrastructure, including the issues of *Niḍāl al-Falāḥīn*, the peasant union organ, and the internal reports of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. One particularly valuable such report is a study of the condition of state farms and coöperatives, *Dirāsa taḥlīliyya muqārana li-wāqi' muzara' dawla wa jama'iyya taā'waniyya zirā'iyya*, (A Comparative Analysis of the Conditions of State Farms, and Agricultural Cooperative Societies); also useful are Aḥmad Zakī al-Imām, *The Co-operative Movement in Syria* by a UN expert, and Dr. Na'im Juma', *Organizations Serving in Rural Areas*, by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture; also reports of the staff of the Institute for Rural and Co-operative Development in Damascus. The writer also explored issues connected with the infrastructure in interviews with the officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, the Agricultural Engineer's Syndicate, and the Agricultural Section of the State Planning Commission.

7. In a survey of the attitudes of members of party organizations given by the author in Syria in 1974, the high saliency of nationalist concerns among peasant youth was highlighted. It was found that rural occupations correlated very highly with higher nationalist attitudes ( $G\text{amma} = .77$ ). The efforts of the Ba'th to mobilize the population around the theme of a "Popular War of Liberation" in Palestine, and the Israeli occupation of Quneitra Province both appear to have acted as catalysts of rural nationalism.

A final factor in mobilization appears to have been the fact that for some ambitious peasants the local organizations of the party and peasant union are centers of opportunity. Younger men especially can find in adhesion to the new system a chance to build local status and power—in a previously age centered milieu—and to associate themselves with the channels of influence reaching up to the government. Some can even entertain realistic prospects of a political career at higher levels of the system. The new régime in the countryside thus constitutes a channel of upward mobility for peasants which has not heretofore been known in the villages.

All of these factors have contributed to the considerable mobilizational success which many local organizations appear to have had. By the 1970s, an alliance of party youth and unionized small and middle peasants had captured the leadership of many villages. According to best available evidence, the party now constitutes a leadership grid of more than 100,000 cadres stretched throughout the country.<sup>8</sup> The peasant union has evidently mobilized about 40 per cent of the economically active adult (over 16) population or about 50 per cent of those eligible for membership.<sup>9</sup> Since 1968, the union claims to have been expanding at a rate of about 30,000 each year.<sup>10</sup> There are also youth organizations, a women's federation and a militia-like "popular army." This system constitutes virtually a new political order in the countryside in competition with and sometimes displacing the traditional order; it represents a new network of political power linking the Ba'thist élite to a mass base.

Despite these apparent achievements, it would be incorrect to leave the impression that the régime has been wholly successful in its mobilizational efforts, and that the new order in the countryside is unchallenged. Several points of weakness can be identified.

First, the régime has not always been able to supply the local organizations with the needs for which they depend on the center. While peasants have been

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8. According to figures from Ba'thī (captured) records published by Avraham Ben-Tzur, "The Composition of the Ba'th Party in the Kuneitra Region," *The Near East*, XVIII (1968) pp. 269–73, there were 2219 members in the Quneitra Branch in 1967, which is about four per cent of the adult population of the province. According to party figures in another district which the writer was able to examine in 1974, the party had a membership of about 2,000 out of an adult population of less than 50,000, again a percentage of about four per cent. If this proportion holds throughout the country (and there is no reason to think these areas are unrepresentative), total party membership can be estimated at about 107,185. By comparison, it may be noted that the Chinese Communist Party constitutes about 2.4 per cent, and the CPSU about seven per cent of the adult populations in their respective countries.

9. Official sources claimed a membership of 213,000 in 1972, which constitutes an estimated 40 per cent of the active rural population over sixteen engaged in agriculture, and perhaps 50 per cent of those eligible (as those who do not work their own land are excluded from membership.) The writer had an opportunity to verify these figures in several trips to the base levels of the organization, and in one province access to union records was possible. In this province, there were 298 village unions with 25,200 members, again about 40 per cent of the agriculturally active adult population. It might be noted that if membership in the union is normally confined to the head of the household, the percentage figures would probably be larger, and the union's mobilizational performance considerably better than this study has estimated.

10. *Sūriyā al-Thawriyya*, 1972, p. 333.

trained to perform many of the tasks involved in the management of the new socioeconomic infrastructure, there is a much greater need for technical assistance than the régime has been able to supply. A shortage of funds also places limits on the projects which local organizations can undertake and sustain with success. In the early 1970s, for example, only about one-third of the agricultural surface had been organized into coöperatives, due primarily to a shortage of technical cadres.

A second weakness is that more than half the countryside remains politically unorganized by the régime and one-half of those eligible for membership in the peasant union have not joined. Many of these are of the lowest stratum of the agricultural population, the agricultural laborers who have less to gain from joining the union. Unlike peasants with land or stable tenures, they have no need of the benefits of the union such as production requisites and marketing, and the union has not organized collective bargaining for them. Many others who have not joined seem to be the more traditional older peasants.

Another weakness is that even those who are members of the organizations cannot all, in reality, be as active, engaged, or highly committed to régime goals as the notion of "mobilization" suggests. They are organizationally linked to the régime center, but a correspondingly strong attitudinal linkage is likely to be absent in many cases. According to motivational data collected by the writer, a portion of the persons who join the new organizations do so less because of strong orientations to the center and its goals than for reasons such as personal connections or a desire for integration into a local center of influence and solidarity.

Finally, despite the creation of the new system of power in the villages, the older system persists. It is true that the local chieftains (*zu'amā'*), and landlords have gradually lost influence as the political center with which they had good connections was destroyed. But the landlord or *za'im* often preserves sufficient wealth and social prestige to maintain in the village something of a rival system of power. Especially to the extent that the land reform has not broken their hold on land or local markets, such traditional élites retain a resource base of power and the masses remain to some extent dependent on them. The landlords and traditional leaders have sometimes chosen to use their resources to undermine the performance of the new leaders by corrupting them or depriving them of influence with sectors of the population. This discussion should not obscure the fact that various forms of accommodation have sometimes developed between new and older leaders. In the case of lesser "traditional" figures such as religious shaykhs and heads of large families good relations very often exist. However, the contradiction between the goals and interests of the Ba'th and the dominant traditional power holders has been serious, and the "overlap" of traditional and revolutionary structures at the local level so typical, evidently, of Egypt,

appears much less characteristic of Syria. (Officially, at least, this overlap is restricted by the exclusion of larger land owners from membership in the peasant union.) In general, to the extent the traditional leadership persists, and to the extent the men of the new mobilization system deviate from the optimal performance norms laid down by the organization, the modernizing and reforming undertakings of the system may be that much less successful. The following cases may add greater concrete dimension to this discussion.

*Four Village Studies in Local Level Mobilization*<sup>11</sup>

*Village A: Limited Reform and Traditional Persistence:* Village A lies close to the provincial capital of Latakia on a fertile plain. Before the Ba'th revolution, the village was owned by four large urban-based families, and worked by peasants under the *métayage* system. Theoretically, the peasant received 25 per cent of the product if he provided work animals, and, if only his own labor, 16 per cent; in practice, he received less than the contract specified as the landlord, doing the accounting and weighing, had a "special way of counting" and made extra deductions for sundry services such as transport and credit given at usurious rates to improvident peasants. The *métayer* had no security of contract, and migration from village to village in search of a contract was not uncommon. The landowners were absentees, with little interest in management or investment on their estates. As urban Sunnīs, some held the 'Alawite peasants in contempt and took their daughters as indentured house servants.<sup>12</sup>

Since the revolution some important though limited changes have taken place in the village. At the time of the 1963 land reform, the landlord families divided the land among family members so that most of their holdings, except 40 hectares, escaped the effect of the law. However, the Law on Agrarian Relations, as it was gradually implemented, has reduced the landlord's share of the harvest to 20 per cent for provision of land; the peasant provides

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11. These village cases are based on expeditions made to the villages by the writer with the coöperation of the Ba'th Party's National Command. In these investigations, the writer had the opportunity to talk to local peasant, party, and coöperative leaders and members, and, in some cases, to persons not involved in the organizations. In evaluating these vignettes, the readers must, of course, keep in mind that they do not purport to be full or complete accounts of village conditions. Rather, they represent insights into the village from a particular point of view; the writer went to the villages with the specific intention of assessing the degree of change in the village precipitated by Ba'th organizational and mobilizational activity at the local level. In addition, constraints on research possibilities did not permit the thorough investigation of villages, typical, for example, of village ethnographies, or a systematic effort to tap all shades of opinion in all villages. As such, these little studies can be offered as tentative probings, not as a definitive mapping.

12. Robin Feddan, *Syria: An Historical Appreciation*, London, 1956, p. 207, describes this area as that where exploitation of the peasant was at its worst, where various forms of compulsory service existed, including in some places the *jus primae noctis*, where the landlord's word was law, protection had to be bought, and the landlord recognized no obligations. "Whatever payment is made everything still remains to be paid for. The peasant is the victim of perpetual blackmail."

plowing and other labor, and seeds obtained through the coöperative, while peasant and landlord share the costs of irrigation. The peasant can only be ousted from the land if two conditions are met, namely that the landlord pay him a compensation, and that the landlord also undertake to work the land directly (i.e. by hiring wage labor). In practice this has meant that the peasant now enjoys security of tenure. This increase in their income and security have allowed some peasants to buy land from the landlord. Presently of the 1200 hectares in the area around the village, 200 were owned by small holding peasants before the reform, 160 have been purchased since, 40 were distributed in the reform, 600 are held by peasants in *métayage* contracts, and 200 are invested by the landlord directly, using hired labor.

The peasant union and the two coöperatives for grain growing and milk have partially displaced the landlord from the center of the socioeconomic web integrating the peasant to society. The coöperative contracts collectively for the provision of some production supplies and for the marketing of some items with private merchants, thus getting a better price than would individual peasants; it deals with government agencies, such as the Cereals Office and the Cotton Oil Factory in regard to other products. The establishment of the milk coöperative, displacing some high charging middlemen between producer and consumer, has permitted substantial additions to peasant incomes. Milk is still not marketed directly to consumers, but through a merchant in the provincial capital; plans are being laid, however, to build a coöperative dairy. The peasant union and the local party organization hold weekly meetings to ensure that peasant rights under the agrarian relations law are being respected, and that the agricultural workers hired by the landlord get their minimum wage. However, the union has apparently not arranged collective bargaining or a collective contract for these workers, and, as such, their income and job security are at a distinctly lower level than that of the peasant owners or *métayage* contract holders. In general, these socioeconomic changes have gone far to remove part of the peasantry from the traditional landlord system of influence, and to attract them to the new system, inasmuch as many of their daily needs are being met through the new linkage and integrating organs established under the Revolution.

Political authority in the village is now represented by new actors and organs and the peasants have been drawn into participation. The head of the party organization is a young village teacher. The leader of the peasant union and the coöperative is a small-holder and *métayer* (that is, he received .3 hectare in the land reform, purchased 1.8 ha., and holds 4 ha. in *métayage* for a total of 6.1 ha.) A third important actor is the local field officer of the Agricultural Ministry. Through this new system of linkage between the village and the center, innovation is passed down to the local level, and the new network of social integration implanted. Thus, the agricultural plan

reaches the peasants, is explained in familiar ways, linking local peasant interests to national level development plans. Through these linkage mechanisms, peasant demands are, to some degree, passed upward. One issue which was salient was the desire of the peasants for another land reform, as they benefited only marginally from the first two; their requests, however, have brought only a decision to reconsider the expropriation and distribution process under the current law to see if the landlords honestly declared their holdings or evaded the law, and to reconsider distributions distorted by personal influence (as when one peasant received better land due to personal connections, causing the others to feel cheated.)

However, the peasant union leadership in this village appears weak. The President is not of a calibre to hold his post, and was only elected by general acclaim (without competition as demanded by the General Federation) because he is well liked and pleasant personally and because, belonging to no kinship bloc, he can be trusted by all. Thus here the persistent influence of kinship bloc rivalry has seemed to produce a gap in leadership. The gap is partly filled by the young men in the party organization and by the local officer of the Agricultural Ministry who takes a paternal interest in the village. It is he who supervised the organization of the two coöperatives, and through his good relations with the peasants, exercises a protective tutelage over them.

The largely intact wealth and social status of the local landlord families have permitted them to sustain a measure of political influence in the village, enough that they may be said to represent a rival power system. Though the landlords are Sunnī and the peasants 'Alawite, the traditionalism of older peasants seems to represent a persisting tie, bridging sectarian differences, and linking them to the landlords. The younger peasants claim that the elders are not oriented to socialist and modernizing ideas such as distributive justice and progress because they believe that God made the world as it is, some rich and some poor, and that men must be content with it. The elders are thus less receptive than younger peasants to the claims of the local party that misery has nothing to do with God, but derives from the behavior of men and that through education and work peasants may improve their lot. According to the union leadership, the landlords talk with the elders about the shift in power to the younger villagers in order to create dissatisfaction among the former. The youth, the landlords suggest, are not capable or responsible, and leadership should lie with the experience of age. They also invoke family rivalries, pointing out that a given leader comes from one family at the expense of another. Their social prestige persists to the extent that when older peasants visit the city, they call on the landlord who uses the opportunity to impress them. The landlord can also use wealth to protect and expand his power base, to try to detach the peasants from the new integra-

tion system, and to build an opposing patronage network. If the coöperative offers 5 per cent profit, the coöperative leaders charge that the landlord promises some peasants 10 per cent to undermine peasant solidarity and the functioning of their institutions. When any of the local institutions malfunction, the landlord is quick to take advantage of the opportunity to discredit them. Finally, as an employer of hired labor in the village, and thus a source of opportunity and livelihood, landlord favors are naturally sought after. As the local union has taken no effective steps to organize collective contracts for the agricultural workers and thus remove them from the landlord's power, they have no reason to give the party or union their loyalties. Thus the landlord is able to maintain a good deal of his old power. But today he no longer has a monopoly of power. The peasants' freedom and life possibilities have increased if only because they now have some choice.

*Village B: From Clan Conflict to Village Cooperation:*<sup>13</sup> Village B, located about 20 km. southeast of Aleppo, is a village of small holders, with an excess of population to land and little class differentiation. Before the Revolution, a towering debt structure obtained, as urban merchant moneylenders provided peasants credit for production requisites at 50 per cent annual interest, then returned at harvest time to claim surpluses for their marketing operations. To meet their needs many peasants had to do seasonal migrant labor in Eastern Syria. The basic units of social life were the extended family clans, allied on the basis of lineage proximity into opposing factions, and then finally into two larger blocs located in opposing village quarters and symbolized by the existence of dual cemeteries, mosques, threshing grounds and *mukhtārs*.

Traditionally, heads of clans constituted the village elders, controlling family wealth, manpower and marriage arrangements. Rival claimants to leadership who used these resources most efficiently or possessed more emerged as leaders. They built leadership by virtue of their ability to protect the kin bloc's honor and goods, reconcile internal bloc conflict, maintain its solidarity by kinship symbol invocation, discipline deviants, and manipulate the feeling of threat from the rival blocs. The principle of political action was that in any conflict one's primary obligation was to support one's nearest kinsman against less close or non-kinsmen. As such, any individual conflict tended to escalate into bloc conflict unless mediators could localize it. If escalated to the village level, the village would be divided into two armed and rival camps, and the issue could often be settled only after violence

13. In investigating this village, the writer had the advantage of a base line for estimating change, and a source of material on which to draw for questions. This village was previously the object of an exhaustive ethnography by Alan Horton, "A Syrian Village in its Changing Environment," Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1961. Much of the description of pre-revolutionary conditions in the village relies on Horton as a base and a check.

had become prohibitively costly, that is, after killings and revenge killings threatened to destroy the community. The traditional objects of conflict were of three typical kinds: 1) rivalry over political offices such as mukhtarships, harvest guards, etc., 2) disputes over boundaries, commonplace in a village wherein holdings were fragmented into small narrow strips, and 3) face or honor, usually connected with the chastity of women, which was believed to reflect on the whole kinship bloc.

The outside world had an important effect on intra-village conflict. Conflict was exacerbated by rival landlords who owned nearby villages, and who each sought to build an alliance of patronage support for election to parliament. The landlord found he could facilitate the building of an alliance if one faction were set against another and would, therefore, be tempted to seek outside protection and support. The local government officer appointed *mukhtārs* on the advice of the landlord and the landlord could intervene with this officer in case a village-client should get into trouble—perhaps commit a crime in the course of village conflict. Generally, the villagers saw these outside powers, whether landlords or government officers, as threats, greedy for their resources or seeking to impose their control on the village. However, alliance should be advantageous in certain cases, especially in securing protection or privilege *vis à vis* an opposing kinship faction. Increasingly, in the late 1950s, outside powers were penetrating the village. The local gendarme acquired the mobility to intervene in village disputes, sometimes neutrally to stop violence, sometimes as an agent of the landlord's purpose. The gendarme tended to constitute himself as a local power in the area, based on his increasing control of the means of violence, and his ability to interpret and impose an alien law against relatively voiceless peasants. Although on occasion the village could present a solid negative front against the outside, the rival factions could seldom agree to coöperate in a positive manner. For example the village was unable to constitute a village council and thus acquire some institutional channels of voice to the government because rival blocs could not reach an agreement on it.

In the early 1960s, three state appointed teachers had appeared in the village, and on the basis of their education and understanding of the outside world, gained some status as opinion leaders on such matters, but not on village affairs. Some young men who had done military service or attended high school in the nearby city had become interested in national politics, and had joined political parties, including the Ba'th. Thus, the ground was being prepared beforehand for the more visible change which began in the village after the Ba'th Revolution in March 1963.

After the Revolution, the young partisans returned to the village to begin building a new system of political leadership and action. They set out to convince the peasants that there were no class cleavages between the oppos-

ing kinship factions, and that they could better serve themselves if they coöperated in the context of village and class unity. Most of the partisans happened to be from a single kinship bloc, so they began to recruit youth from all blocs, enlisting these youths as channels of communication and influence into the blocs. The next step was to begin establishment of the mass organization to include all the village, notably the Peasant Union. Since then a new system of village leadership has gradually emerged. The union has 120 members out of 205 households, thus slightly more than one-half of the village. It has a five member executive organ and attached committees designed to draw the peasants into participation in matters most important to the village, namely "agricultural affairs" to deal with supply and marketing, "organization" to expand membership, "culture" as a channel of political and technical education from the union center, and, perhaps most important for this village, a committee on "conflict resolution."

The growth of the new system of power was accompanied by a number of sociopolitical changes. Firstly, as security came to be firmly established in the village and clan hostility muted, traditional leadership—based heavily on clan solidarity against threats offered by rival clans—lost some of its rationale. Then, the downfall of landlord power in the district due to a deeply biting land reform, and the destruction of the landlord's patronage influence with the state machinery and in parliament, removed outside influences which profited from village disunity. In place of the traditional élite in Damascus and Aleppo, a new power emerged connected to the party and peasant organizations in the village. As traditional clan leaders thereby lost their outside connections, younger men emerged in control of the connections to the political center, men who were educated, able to articulate the new national ideology and understand the goals and laws of the new political élite. Outside power, formerly a threat making demands to be evaded and only intermittently present in the village, had now decisively penetrated the heart of the village, recruiting its own sons. Gradually, it began to offer services which became important in peasant lives and began to attach peasant interests to the régime.

The objects and methods of political action have also been changed. As the old fragmented system of strip holdings has been eradicated and land consolidated into larger, well defined entities, the occasions of boundary conflict have been considerably reduced. Political office is still an object of competition, but now office is secured less by clan support and the invocation of lineage ideology, than by the issues and orientations of national level politics. Thus, the system of dual *mukhtārs* has disappeared, one retiring from politics, the other of much decreased influence; the functions of the headmen are now being assumed by the party and peasant union and a new village wide council. Attitudes toward women's honor, previously

an object of conflict, appear to be changing, especially among the youth who now hold power. In a discussion of this subject, the new leaders defended the right of youth to choose their own mates regardless of clan bloc politics. The young party cadres declared that persons guilty of murdering women for alleged breaches of chastity—previously an acceptable practice—should be severely punished as a deterrent to such behavior rather than, as previously, using custom as a rationale for treating offenders leniently. As new sources of livelihood, not under control of family and clan heads become available, youth are acquiring an objective independence in matters of marriage and honor to match their apparent subjective independence.

The peasant union and party organization now appear as centers of conflict resolution and as generators of coöperative endeavor aimed at village improvement. In two recent cases of conflict the peasant union is said to have played a decisive mediating rôle. In one case, two brothers disputed over whether to give their sister a full share of the land inherited from their father. When one brother refused her a full share and planted wheat on the land, the other plowed it over to avenge the sister. The union called the parties together and settled the matter amicably. The brother who had plowed the wheat over had to make restitution, but the union insisted successfully, by invoking civil law as against Islamic law's designation of a half-share for women, on a full share for the sister. In the second case, there was a dispute over ownership of two trees at the boundary of property. One party ripped the trees out in anger. The other reported the incident to the union which formed an impartial committee. It was decided that each owned one tree and the first party was required to pay for one of the trees he had uprooted. Thus, the petty disputes of everyday life can be solved without invoking clan hostility and involving the whole village in conflict.

On the other hand, the new system has involved the peasants in coöperative work in paving village roads, building harvest roads to link fields to the market, emplacing utilities, and building schools in coöperation with a national program called "Popular Work" which provides funds and technicians if communities are willing to contribute labor for self development. A new market has been built and an electric grid line installed which, as in hundreds of other villages across Syria, now awaits the completion of the Euphrates Dam to activate it. Projects which would previously have stumbled on the rocks of clan division, now appear to enlist energies. The peasant union leadership even appears as a center of innovation and entrepreneurship: as soon as the central coöperative organization can provide the technical assistance, the union is ready to organize a coöperative. Already the union head is talking about the advantages which could be derived from the creation of a higher level production coöperative. Small land holdings, he says, can be consolidated to take advantage of mechanization; if peasants are

organized into specialized work teams on collective village property, the advantages of a modern division of labor can help increase yield on insufficient land resources. Thus the union holds potential to function as an effective channel of technical and social innovation into the village.

Through integration into the new social and economic infrastructure, peasant lives appear to be improving. The grip of moneylenders and merchants has been substantially reduced as the peasant union has assumed the functions of dealing directly for peasants with the Agricultural and Coöperative Bank. Cotton and wheat are marketed by the union with the state. Now the debt load of peasants has been reduced and some of them can make investments in their land. They no longer have to migrate for seasonal agricultural work, but some are finding jobs in the new factories in the city and in the state and party apparatuses. Through these jobs, money flows back into the village. Now the union card provides access to free medical service in the city, and a doctor and nurse visit the new party constructed clinic three times weekly. Migration of families to secure secondary schooling for their children has declined because adequate schools now exist in the village. Since the Revolution, education in the village has expanded greatly and there are now 40 teachers rather than three, 22 of whom are party members. Through them, the younger generation is being raised in new attitudes and in loyalties to the new political system.

There is some economic differentiation among the peasants, namely that between landholders and the many in this land poor village who do not own land. This could become a significant class cleavage if alternative sources of income were insufficient, and the landless became dependent on owners, or if the latter ceased to work their own land and resorted to hired labor. This does not seem to be happening, however, and no "kulak" stratum seems to be emerging. Firstly, land holdings are too small to support such a stratum. Secondly, the peasant union seems equally controlled by owners and non-owners; the President owns land and hires seasonal help, but three of the five members of the executive organ are agricultural workers. In this village, therefore, this lower stratum of the agricultural population has not been excluded from political participation. Furthermore, the traditional family ties of owners and non-owners mitigate class stratification and predispose owners to deal more fairly with laborers. Finally, some peasants are finding jobs in Aleppo.

What seems clear, however, is that in this village, like many others in Syria today, land is insufficient to support a growing population at a level suitable to growing aspirations. Resources in the village can be developed within limits, but real solutions lie in the provision of more economic opportunity at the national level, in modern industry, government and services. Thus, the economic base of village isolation from the broader politi-

cal and social arena has been undermined; if villagers are to survive and prosper, they must secure some political voice and protection at the national level. This is yet another factor behind the growing importance of the new system of political linkage; through it the village may seek political voice and career opportunities. This suggests that if the national élite is able to provide expanding political and economic opportunity, it will be able to use the new linkage apparatus as a powerful means of peasant mobilization; conversely, to the extent mobilization outruns economic development, the result is likely to be growing discontent.

As for those peasants who choose not to involve themselves in the new organizations, they appear to be mostly older peasants, as in Village A. The new village leaders refer to them as those who cannot develop their minds. "We respect them and do not quarrel with them," they say. Given the virtual elimination of landlord influence, the basis of a rival power system, which might attract these traditionalist peasants, apparently does not exist.

*Village C: Political Fragmentation and Organizational Stagnation:* Village C, located in the mountains about 20 km. east of Homs, is composed of small holders with minimal class stratification and has an excess and growing population. Unlike Village B, this village—a Christian village—had experienced a profound social and political mobilization long before the Ba'th régime seized power. In the 1940s and 1950s, population pressures and a consciousness of opportunities in the cities and outside of Syria had already induced migration from the village and an intense drive for education and careers outside of agriculture. At the same time, political parties appeared in the village, competing for recruits. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party or *Sūrī Qawmī* appeared in the 1940s, followed by the communists. Akram Hawrānī's Arab Socialist Party and the Ba'th of Michel Aflaq came next, and after their merger achieved predominance. Village C was thus early a Ba'thist stronghold and center of recruitment.

The appearance of the parties grew on and facilitated a social mobilization which quickly undermined the traditional system of kinship solidarity and rivalry. The parties recruited across kinship lines, gradually realigning the village into new political party based blocs. The Ba'th attracted young men by ideological appeals to loyalties beyond particularistic and local levels, invoking the symbols of Arab unity, nationalist concern with Israel, and socialist demands for a better deal for peasants. Others joined because of family or friendship ties with the ideologically mobilized, or because they saw opportunities in the parties for careers outside of agriculture. Fathers might join to further their sons' future. As the parties established schools in the village, they used the intense drive for education to attract and indoctrinate young men.

Socialist, anti-feudal and anti-bourgeois appeals found fertile ground here. Although the village itself was not held by a landlord, peasant struggle with landlords in nearby villages sometimes reached the level of violent conflict, spilling out over the entire district. Peasants organized by Akram Hawrānī seized dozens of villages in the early 1950s, but the landlords called in the army to evict them. The village itself was in the grip of urban merchants who lent credit for production requisites at usurious interest, then collected the crop from their clients, leaving the peasant with only very little surplus. Usually the buyers found ways to pay even less than they had promised, relying on their class control of the market and the law. Sometimes resentful peasants destroyed their crops rather than accept such low prices. In 1954, young Ba'thists from this village and others fanned out over the district to mobilize peasant support for an anti-landlord candidate. Although the candidate was unsuccessful, this campaign made a serious dent in the landlord's control of the area.

As a village which has followed the path of the Ba'th Party, it has also come to reflect inside itself the conflicts and fragmentations that party has suffered. The party has experienced four major and many more minor splits. Before 1958, the growing radicalism of the party as well as other personal reasons had induced some members to drift away from the party, although they continued to regard themselves as the true old Ba'thists. In 1959, a most damaging split occurred from the point of view of the village when Hawrānī and Aflaq parted ways over policy toward Nāṣir. Hawrānī had strong support in the village because of his record in the peasant struggle against feudalism, but others could not tolerate his anti-unionist stand with the *Infisāl* régime. Another traumatic experience for village Ba'thists occurred in 1966, when the left wing of the party chased party founder, Michel Aflaq, from Syria. As most Ba'thists from the village joined the party in the early years when Aflaq was undisputed spiritual mentor of the party, many left with him. They regarded the Movement of 23 February as an undemocratic military putsch against the party. Others had moved ideologically away from Aflaq's positions and identified with the radicals in Damascus. But in 1970, the radicals themselves fell from power, and their supporters in the village were now alienated. The Asad régime successfully attracted some of the older Ba'thists back to the party, but even after the establishment of the National Progressive Front in Damascus, many Hawrānī type Ba'thists still regard the régime with hostility. Some now regard themselves as Marxist-Leninists and as a front of opposition to any possible accommodations of the régime with Israel, though earlier they did not coöperate with the radical wing of the party. Some Aflaqite Ba'thists are also putting a distance between themselves and what they see as the accommodationist trend in Damascus. All these older Ba'thists regard the present leaders in the village as oppor-

tunists; they speak of the corruption of the régime, the lack of internal democracy in the party and military domination. Thus the Ba'thist revolution has brought to this village not unity for common goals, but political fragmentation.

As the older Ba'thists have withdrawn from the party, its leadership has gravitated into new hands. The older Ba'thists came from the more independent peasantry who were first able to get education for their sons. Now, as many of these sons have departed from the village and the party, some to the cities, some even out of Syria, the lower strata of peasants have emerged as local party and union leaders. Some of the old members do remain, but the center of gravity has shifted.

There is a peasant union in the village and village crops are marketed through a coöperative. This has helped to relieve the peasant of debt and dependency on merchants. But many older peasants are not very active in these organizations because of the political rivalries discussed and because they are now prosperous and independent as their sons have sent money back to the village. They do, however, market their crops through the coöperative.

The less well off peasants seem to find the peasant union and party more important for their needs. They are always hired by the more prosperous peasants at harvest time; now that the sons of the latter have departed, they need hired assistance even more. The control of political power may give the poorer peasants some protection they might not otherwise have in the employer-employee relation.

Although the local leaders have brought roads and utilities to the village, they seem to have made no serious impression here. The multiplicity of cleavages, stemming from a history of party and factional competition, has politically fragmented the village and prevented them from acting as a strong support-mobilizing leadership. They seem helpless to solve the basic problems of important parts of the village population: on the one hand, they cannot build a political consensus among a politicized peasant population committed to differing conceptions of how Syria should be ruled; on the other hand, their efforts seem only marginal to solving the problems of economic opportunity and careers for many socially mobilized young men. Some of the latter have left Syria for both political and economic reasons. They were thoroughly mobilized long before the régime was able to open up new opportunities for careers and income, and, at any rate, higher incomes and better jobs were available outside of Syria. Further, political disappointment had diminished attachments to the homeland. Thus the system has failed to integrate them or engage their commitments. This case reveals again the importance of the wider world to socially mobilizing villagers, but unlike Case B, we are here confronted with evidence that the system is not coping with the necessity to provide ways of fulfilling awakened aspirations.

Further, while the pervasiveness of political cleavage has long been marked at the élite level in Syria, this case indicates that in some instances such cleavage has diffused downward, undermining the régime's ability to mobilize support among its "natural mass base."

*Village D: From Tribal Domination to Class Coöperation:* Village D is a village of settled Bedouin located 20 km. West of Raqqa on the Euphrates River. In the course of the transformation of the nomadic sheep-herding tribe into an agrarian community, the tribal chief and his closest relatives were able, with the help of the old landlord controlled government, to secure the right of private property over land assigned to the tribe as a collectivity. The tribesmen were turned into agricultural laborers and sharecroppers. In some cases, they were left without any stable means of livelihood as the chief, preferring less intractable labor than that of the formerly independent tribesmen, imported submissive peasants from the West to work the land. In the desert where most adults had preserved, to some degree, a measure of independence based on fighting skills, ownership of sheep, and the need for willing coöperation during migration, differentiations of wealth were minimized and chieftains ruled by personal prestige and primitive democratic consensus. After the settlement, however, the chief came to rule by virtue of his monopolistic control of economic resources in land, buttressed by the invocation of kinship solidarity and resort to coercion. The chieftain and his relatives who acted as armed enforcers acquired virtually unlimited and arbitrary power over the persons and property of the tribesmen. As they differentiated themselves in life style and status from the tribal masses, they had to rely increasingly on coercion and less on appeal to blood solidarity. In the early 1950s, they forced the closing of the first school for tribesmen when students questioned their arbitrary rule. In 1955, when dissenting tribesmen, customarily trucked to polls to vote for the chief, appeared intent on voting for an opposition candidate, they were trucked instead into the desert.

After the Revolution, the chieftain lost the support of the government. But as the party élite was preoccupied with other matters, it was not until 1966 that tribesmen were organized by the new party cell and the provincial level union into a village peasant union. The union immediately proved its value to the tribesmen-peasants by insisting on the enforcement of the previously ignored Agrarian Relations Law. Whereas they previously received only 25 per cent of the product, they now got 40 per cent simply for labor. In 1967, the land reform came and the tribal chieftain lost his control of community economic resources. The tribal leader tried to sabotage the reform, telling tribesmen that to accept land would turn them into employees of the government. When this did not happen, his credibility suffered.

The union tried to build a horizontal "peasant class solidarity" to displace vertical kinship ties which linked the tribesmen to the chief. When the chief tried to expel some seasonal workers of non-tribal origin at the time of the reform, the union defended their right to stay and receive land even though they did not belong to the tribe. The president of the village peasant union acted as the leader of those willing to accept change, representing a source of competing national and class values in a milieu previously ruled exclusively by tribalism. He was selected to attend the Peasant Cultural Institute in Damascus and, as one of the better students, went on for further training in the German Democratic Republic. He insists that the tribal leaders did not respect kinship bonds, but only used them to exploit the tribal masses. Even the elders shake their heads in agreement and recount stories of the abuse they suffered under the old system. The image of this peasant leader, trained in a far off industrialized communist country and returned to the desert fringe as a carrier of new ideas and loyalties, appears to be a striking example of the changes the Ba'th régime is bringing to Syria.

After the land reform, the peasants were more and more willing to follow the new system of political leadership in the village. In the union, they found protection against the arbitrariness of tribal power. As a coöperative was organized, they began to be integrated into a new socioeconomic system. The coöperative was not, however, an immediate success. It lost money, falling into a 200,000 Syrian Pound debt to the government. The tribal chief, who still owned land in the village, tried to convince tribesmen they would lose by involving themselves. When the president took coöperative funds to Raqqa to purchase needed irrigation pumps and pipes, he told the tribesmen that they had lost all, that the man would not return, and that they would starve. The peasants were fearful, but the union assured them that their "brother" would never do such a thing. When, in fact, the disaster did not come about, the tribal leaders were again discredited. Many peasants left the coöperative in its struggling days, but the hard core of the union organization committed to its success, made it work; by 1974, coöperative debts had been covered, an 80,000 S.P. profit earned, and two tractors purchased. Indicative of the subsequent shift in influence in the village, is the move of the tribal chief to the city, and the change of heart on the part of his sons who, now working the land as ordinary peasants, want to join the coöperative. They express regret for the past and praise the peasants as good people.

### *Conclusions*

Do these cases throw any light on the performance of the Ba'th régime in its mobilizational and organizational effort? The importance of the Ba'th's drive for organizational penetration of the village through local recruitment

does appear to be exemplified in the cases; in addition, the Ba'th does appear to be having some success in this effort. The apparent successes of régime programs in Villages B and D seem to have been very much a function of the recruitment of such a local presence. It seems unlikely that these programs could have been readily imposed from outside by bureaucracy, or even from inside by enlisting the coöperation of traditional influentials. In case B, as long as government was an alien power above and outside the community, it was evaded and impotent to effect major reorganization in village life. Traditional leaders appear to have been too deeply socialized into a culture of conflict to take the lead in social change. Only because the party youth could be recruited to the modernizing effort from all village kinship factions was it possible to bring influence to bear in the village among all the families. Similarly, in case D, the coöperative was only made to work because a part of the local community itself, the local peasant union leaders, committed themselves to keeping it going through rough times. Through the example of their persistence, they were finally able to swing the community behind them. On the other hand, the less successful stories of villages A and C can probably be attributed in part to the weakness of local leadership; clearly, organizational penetration, *per se*, is not alone a sufficient condition for success.

Ideal-typically, the Ba'th mobilizational effort has also depended on the ability of local cadres to function effectively as a channel through which élite goals could be translated into meaningful symbols and concrete programs attractive to people in the villages. The cases give sharper focus to this notion; they also indicate that the régime is having some, but far from complete success in doing this.

Village D is an example of a case where land reform and social reorganization offered local cadres the opportunity to make a direct identification between peasant needs and a modernizing revolution which aims to supercede tribal, family and sectarian ties with bonds of class coöperation and political citizenship. The peasant leader's insistence that tribal blood ties should not be the exclusive basis of social and political organization could only make sense to the tribesmen because he was able to engage them in an alternative system which better met certain of their needs. This, in turn, was only possible because the land reform removed the basis of the community's economy from the traditional system of organization and put it at the disposal of the new system. Village B is a similar case. Party and union cadres were able to demonstrate to villagers the futility of kinship conflict because they were able to take the leadership in organizing a system of coöperation which better met local needs for such things as production supplies, marketing and conflict resolution and gave peasants independence of the urban merchants who had previously dominated the village economy.

In case A, in contrast, opportunities have been lost whereby the local cadres might have built a stronger leadership status through local reform. The new men in the village have failed to build leadership among the agricultural laborers by organizing collective bargaining with the landlords; thus, the theoretical attractiveness of the reforming ideology of the party to laborers has done little to link them to the new order in this village because the system fails to touch their concrete needs. Further, the failure of the land reform seriously to dent landlord control of land in this village has allowed the old élite to preserve a considerable socioeconomic base of political power; these resources are used to maintain a competitive power system, to keep some peasants attached to the old order, deprive the new leaders of peasant resources and commitments, and sometimes to "corrupt" and undermine the new system.

In the case of village C, early mobilization, high expectations and political fragmentation have also deprived the local cadres of the opportunity to meet the needs of many villagers. In consequence, they appear to have had very little success in mobilizing power in this village.

What assessments can be made on the basis of these cases as to the larger implications and consequences of the Ba'th mobilizational and organizational drive for both the villages and the régime?

These cases do seem to support the proposition implied in the model that the new linkage system has had some success in undermining the attachments of the masses to the régime's traditional rivals, legitimizing its rule in the countryside, and building a base of peasant support. Given the persistence of opposition power in the cities, this rural base represents an indispensable source of stability and power. However, there are also indications that this success has been only partial and that the political cleavages characteristic of the urban center have also penetrated into the countryside. In case A, traditional power remains strong, and in case C, "progressive"-oriented peasants are deeply divided.

Despite these problems, the new system has probably gone far toward bridging the traditional chasm between the city and country and integrating the peasant masses into the political system. New organizational linkages, entailing channels for political participation, recruitment patterns, and infrastructure for the exchange of agricultural and social products and services, now directly and systematically tie political center and periphery together. There do appear to be limits to this system, as case C indicates. The relatively sophisticated peasants in this village are far from satisfied with the performance of the system in institutionalizing processes of political participation, as indicated by their complaints at the lack of democracy and military interference in politics. But for peasants in the other villages, the new system appears to create a sense of citizenship heretofore lacking.

It does appear that the régime has enjoyed a considerable measure of success in efforts aimed at the social reform and economic development of the countryside, and the mobilization of peasants in these efforts. This peasant mobilization has inevitably had the effect of sparking a considerable rise in aspirations among Syrian peasants. The question therefore raises itself as to whether the system has, and will have in the future, the capacity to meet the new needs it is creating. Can it provide modern careers and establish a growing productive infrastructure capable of supporting viable peasant communities adapted to modernity and effectively integrated into the national center? Our cases give us ambiguous signals.

Village A is the most ambiguous case. There the peasants are not particularly well off and the modest land reform has failed to improve seriously their condition by redistributing resources in land. However, it can perhaps be said that peasants in this village have gained a new measure of social independence inasmuch as the previous personal dominance of the landlords has been broken, and as they have attained some security through the peasant union and the law of agrarian relations. They are only now emerging from centuries of backwardness and repression suffered by the 'Alawite peasantry.<sup>14</sup>

Village B is a more optimistic story. Here mobilized villagers appear to be finding opportunities in the new factories, in education, and in the state and party apparatuses. The new village leadership seems forward looking and capable of taking advantage of new opportunities. But there are also signs of difficulties. For example, the peasants are ready to form a coöperative, but have to wait until the government can provide technical assistance. This, writ large, is another aspect of the situation in the Syrian countryside, namely a scarcity of the capital and technical manpower needed to produce a real agrarian revolution. The régime has substantially replaced the landlords and merchants in their old rôles of supplying production requisites, credit and marketing services, but it has not yet demonstrated a notable capacity to mobilize agrarian capital by getting peasants to save and invest or by taxing surpluses. This Syrian road to development does seem to have the advantage of saving the peasants from capitalist or "Stalinist" roads wherein typically peasant communities are shattered and the peasants made to bear the heaviest burdens of modernization.<sup>15</sup> But it remains unclear whether a system which eschews these ruthless but time tested techniques of capital mobilization can ensure the rapid economic expansion needed to comple-

14. Interestingly, the strong 'Alawite representation in the Ba'th régime has not seemed to profit these peasants much *vis à vis* their Sunnī landlords, as one might expect if sectarian loyalties were predominant factors in Syrian politics.

15. For a discussion of the peasant problem and roads to modernization, see Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Boston, 1966, and Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1969.

ment rapid social mobilization and population growth. In a case such as Syria, where national commitments cause the diversion of a large proportion of resources into nonproductive military spending, the problem becomes especially acute.

The benefits of the Syrian road to development do seem well exemplified in case D. The régime has turned the process of tribal settlement, initially a disaster for tribesmen, into a workable arrangement. The tribesmen-peasants are at a lower level of social mobilization than the peasants in the other cases, and land is sufficient to meet their needs. Here prospects for the development of a community capable of satisfying gradually rising needs seems quite good.

In contrast, Village C represents a warning of potential failure, and of the consequences of a significant divergence between the mobilization of aspirations and system response. The system has simply not met the desire of many of these peasants for careers and income, and, as a result, it has failed to integrate them into the régime's support base. If we suppose that eventually other villages will reach the same level of social mobilization as this village, does this mean that Village C represents the future of Syria? It does, if the expansion in the Syrian economy, which up to now has been creditable, should falter.

Clearly, Syria has by no means solved the dilemmas of political and socio-economic modernization. The success or failure of the Ba'th enterprise in the villages as well as on the national level cannot yet be gauged more than partially. Much now depends on the quality of the leadership in the next decade. Much also depends on factors considerably outside of Syria's control, notably the problems of Palestine and the occupied territories and the uses and effects of the new Arab oil wealth. But at least it does seem that the creation of the new social and political infrastructure and the social reforms traced in this study have laid part of the essential basis for the continuing modernization of Syrian state and society.