Movements After Revolution

A History of People's Struggles in Mexico

Miles V. Rodríguez

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ORGANIZATIONS

AFL	American Federation of Labor, USA
AFM	Alianza de Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos Alliance of Mexican Railroad Workers
BO	Bloque Obrero Labor Bloc
BOCN	Bloque Obrero y Campesino Nacional National Worker and Peasant Bloc
CDP	Comité de Defensa Proletaria Proletarian Defense Committee
CGT	Confederación General de Trabajadores General Confederation of Workers
CI	Communist International Comintern
CNC	Confederación Nacional Campesina National Peasant Confederation
CNCT	Confederación Nacional Católica de Trabajo National Catholic Confederation of Labor
COJ	Confederación Obrera de Jalisco Labor Confederation of Jalisco
COM	Casa del Obrero Mundial House of the World's Worker
CPANOC	Comité Pro-Asamblea Nacional Obrera y Campesina Pro-Worker and Peasant National Assembly Committee
CPUO	Comité Pro-Unificación Obrera Pro-Labor Unification Committee
CROM	Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana Regional Mexican Labor Confederation
CSFRM	Confederación de Sociedades Ferrocarrileras de la República Mexicana

	Confederation of Railroad Worker Societies of the Mexican Republic
CSLA	Confederación Sindical Latino Americana Latin American Union Confederation
CSUM	Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México Unitary Union Confederation of Mexico
CTC	Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones Confederation of Transportation and Communication Workers
CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores de México Confederation of Workers of Mexico
DN	División del Norte Division of the North
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
ELS	Ejército Libertador del Sur Liberating Army of the South
FJCM	Federación de Jóvenes Comunistas de México Communist Youth Federation of Mexico
FNM	Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México National Railways of Mexico
FOT	Federación Obrera de Tampico Labor Federation of Tampico
ICAM	Iglesia Católica Apostólica Mexicana Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
Krestintern	International Peasant Council
LAI/LADLA	Liga Anti-Imperialista de las Americas Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas
LCAEV	Liga de Comunidades Agrarias del Estado de Veracruz League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Veracruz
LNC	Liga Nacional Campesina National Peasant League
LNDLR	Liga Nacional de Defensa de la Libertad Religiosa National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty
OMFL	Orden de Maquinistas y Fogoneros de Locomotoras Order of Locomotive Engineers and Brakemen

PAN	Partido de Acción Nacional National Action Party
PCM	Partido Comunista de México Communist Party of Mexico
PFU	Partido Ferrocarrilero Unitario Unitary Railroad Worker Party
PLM	Partido Laborista Mexicano Mexican Labor Party
PLM	Partido Liberal Mexicano Mexican Liberal Party
PNA	Partido Nacional Agrarista National Agrarian Party
PNR	Partido Nacional Revolucionario National Revolutionary Party
PP	Partido Popular Popular Party
PPS	Partido Popular Socialista Popular Socialist Party
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional Institutional Revolutionary Party
PRM	Partido de la Revolución Mexicana Party of the Mexican Revolution
RILU	Red International of Labor Unions, or Profintern
SFDV	Sociedad Ferrocarrilera Departamento de Vía Railway Society of the Maintenance-of-Way Department
SME	Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas Mexican Union of Electrical Workers
SOTPE	Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors
SRI	Sindicato Revolucionario de Inquilinos Revolutionary Union of Tenants
SSAIC	Secretariado Sudamericana de la Internacional Comunista South American Secretariat of the Communist International
STFRM	Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros de la República Mexicana Union of Railroad Workers of the Mexican Republic

Tsektran	Joint Union of Rail and Water Transport Workers, USSR
TUEL	Trade Union Educational League, USA
UCMGF	Unión de Conductores, Maquinstas, Garroteros y Fogoneros Union of Conductors, Locomotive Engineers, Brakemen, and Firemen
UMM	Unión de Mecánicos Mexicana Union of Mexican Machinists

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

DEN	Departamento de la Estadística Nacional National Department of Statistics
DT	Departamento de Trabajo Department of Labor
Gobernación	Secretariat of Governance
JFCA	Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration
PGR	Procurador General de la República Attorney General of the Republic
SCOP	Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas Secretariat of Communications and Public Works
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Publica Secretariat of Public Education
SICT	Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo Secretariat of Industry, Commerce, and Labor
SRE	Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores Secretariat of Foreign Relations

MOVEMENTS AFTER REVOLUTION

Introduction

After the Mexican Revolution, between the end of World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression, strategic parts of people's movements in Mexico, the labor movement and the agrarian movement, began to unite under Communist leadership, creating unique organizations of struggle. In these years, people throughout the nation formed an unprecedented variety of organizations and movements to struggle for a vast array of demands and diverse forms of justice.[1] Workers in many different industries organized numerous unions, confederations, and other associations to fight for improved wages, hours, and working conditions. Members of thousands of rural communities created agrarian leagues to claim rights to land and other natural resources as part of the country's growing commitment to agrarian reform. Communist organizers attempted to draw industrial workers into the labor movement, members of rural communities into the agrarian movement, and to unite these two movements. These organizers sought to create a national revolutionary alliance against capitalism and the state, as part of an international revolutionary movement for socialism.

Despite their efforts, however, the labor movement and the agrarian movement did not unite as one. The struggles of these two movements did not fundamentally change class relations, end class antagonisms, or diminish capitalism. Much less did they begin a transition toward socialism or another revolution like the previous Mexican Revolution, or like other revolutions that occurred elsewhere in the twentieth century. Rural Catholics known as the Cristeros formed the most powerful independent people's movement of the early post-revolutionary era and arose in a widespread religious revolt in defense of their faith. Unlike the Cristeros, the labor movement and the agrarian movement did not rebel or significantly threaten the state. Instead, conflicts within and between the labor and agrarian movements divided them and generated the conditions for ruthless and ruinous struggles with companies, landlords, and the state. By severely debilitating these movements and their most independent representatives, the state and its allies ensured the trauma and decay of these people's movements.

"People's movements" and "popular movements" have similar meanings, but this book refers to "people's movements" to emphasize movements that

were deliberately by, for, or sought to represent "the people" and so were more than merely "popular." This emphasis on "people's movements" is also meant to facilitate global and international comparisons relevant to revolutions and post-revolutionary processes and situations throughout the twentieth-century world. Reference here to "people's movements" and "people's struggles" allows comparison to "people's armies" that fought "people's wars," in which forces with limited resources rose up against more powerful forces, and sometimes formed "people's republics," for the conscious purpose of "people's liberation." This book refers to "struggles" as conflicts that unfold through time between at least two antagonistic forces, such as classes, movements, or organizations, or within a class, movement, or organization. It refers to "organizations of struggle" as those organizations that formed to take part in a particular kind of struggle, such as for improved working conditions or land reform, or to explicitly fight in the class struggle. The organizations of struggle that this book studies always belonged to at least one larger people's movement. The book refers to "parts" of movements that included specific groups of organizations in order to distinguish those parts from individual organizations and the movements as a whole. The "independent" parts were those that generally sought or fought for autonomy from or against the state, and its allied organizations and parts of movements. The most "strategic" parts of movements had disproportionate power in a given struggle. The most strategic part of the labor movement represented industrial workers who used their industrially and technically strategic positions at work to stop or continue production or transportation.[2]

The book studies and emphasizes the possibilities of "alliances" between strategic organizations and parts of movements in the creation of broader coalitions. The goal is to specify how they attempted to use their interdependence with outside forces to increase their fighting capacity and probability of success in a given struggle. This book studies struggles that occurred during "crises," those historical moments when the ruling class or the state, or their opponents, were most endangered by internal or external forces or threats. It does so because in crises, struggles that normally did not have a strong effect on power relations had a greater capacity to change or overthrow the existing power relations. This book finds that in particular historical struggles during post-revolutionary crises, the force that most successfully developed and deployed an effective strategy, including for the formation of powerful alliances, mattered most to the results of the struggles and the crises.

This book closely examines the relatively unknown and unexamined histories of specific parts of the labor and agrarian movements that began to align

with one another in Mexico. It demonstrates how the state prevented these parts of movements from forming lasting alliances, and ruined them. The state simultaneously carried out calamitous attacks on most people's movements. The ruination of these specific parts of movements was therefore part of larger post-revolutionary processes detrimental to people's movements as a whole. It focuses primarily on a series of national organizations that belonged to the labor movement, the agrarian movement, or both. Within the labor movement, it most closely considers the Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (Confederation of Transport and Communication Workers, CTC), founded in 1921, and refounded and renamed in 1926. Within the agrarian movement, it concentrates on the Liga Nacional Campesina (National Peasant League, LNC), founded in 1926. The Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, PCM), founded in 1919 and refounded in 1921, was crucial to the formation and leadership of both the CTC and the LNC, and alignments between them. The PCM was also indispensable to the creation of several unique organizations that included the CTC, LNC, and other labor and agrarian organizations within their memberships. Among these organizations that had members in both the labor movement and the agrarian movement, this book details the development of the Bloque Obrero y Campesino Nacional (National Worker and Peasant Bloc, BOCN), and the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México (Unitary Union Confederation of Mexico, CSUM), both founded in 1929.

Each of these organizations had international affiliations, such as with the Communist International (Comintern), founded in 1919; the Comintern-allied Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern), founded in 1921; and the International Peasant Council (Krestintern), founded in 1923. For example, the PCM was the national section of the Comintern, while the CSUM and LNC were members of the Profintern and Krestintern, respectively. Their participation in global revolutionary networks encouraged all of these organizations in Mexico to form unusual national relationships with one another, influenced how they began to combine their different demands in common struggles, and proved that their struggles could not be confined only to the labor movement or the agrarian movement, and their respective antagonists in Mexico.

This book argues that several different kinds of challenges and divisions were too powerful for any individual, group, organization, or movement to overcome, and these challenges made attempts to create lasting unity within and between movements practically impossible after the Mexican Revolution. The resulting struggles mostly resulted in failure and defeat, but it is important to understand how and why this happened and to recognize the most significant consequences.

The struggles dramatized the fact that movements needed strong, disciplined, and unified organizations, alliances, and strategies in order to have any chance of success against more powerful companies, landlords, and the state. While it was not possible to accomplish any of these goals at the time, the explicit attempts to do so clarified the limited extent of the organized power of the people in the early years after the Revolution. The struggles' failures in the 1920s helped originate the powerful national labor and agrarian organizations that formed in the 1930s. Partly because the state suppressed the strongest of these organizations in the 1920s, it was able to subdue their descendants in the 1930s. Thereafter, the state exerted power over these organizations through its allied party's incorporation of them as national party sectors and other means. Conflicts between independent and state-allied forces within the labor and agrarian movements continued for the remainder of the century and beyond the millennium. The struggles of the 1920s nonetheless provided people's movements with valuable experiences and instilled in them a fighting spirit that lives on to this day.

Understanding the struggles of the independent parts of these people's movements in the first years after the Revolution requires a different approach than most studies of people's movements. Existing works on people's movements in early post-revolutionary Mexico have not done justice to these parts of movements and their struggles. Most have focused on only one kind of movement at the local, state, or regional level, including studies on the Cristeros at each of these levels.[3] Studies on the labor movement have provided most insights on the strength of unions in specific industries.[4] Those on the agrarian movement have best explained the local origins of rural community power.[5] Those on Communism have revealed most about struggles and alliances involving more than one movement, as well as their national and international connections.[6] Overviews focused on the Mexican state have offered critical insights on the roles the state played in the ruin of these movements, but none of these works has detailed the parts of the labor and agrarian movements which developed nationally and began to align with each other in the 1920s.[7] Through a detailed analysis of local and global factors, and of the relationships between the parts of the two movements, this work highlights divisions and differences that limited movements, prevented alliances between them, and revealed the extent of their power.[8]

The labor movement and the agrarian movement existed before the Revolution, but many of the specific organizations that mattered early after the Revolution formed at the very end of it or in subsequent years. Understanding the causes and impact of the Mexican Revolution is essential to the examination of the events that took place after the Revolution ended. Following many

major studies, this book marks the chronology of the Mexican Revolution as 1910–20.[9] This was from the Plan de San Luis Potosí in November 1910, when Francisco I. Madero declared revolution against Porfirio Díaz, to the Plan de Agua Prieta in April 1920, when the northwestern bourgeois faction rose against Venustiano Carranza. The Plan de Agua Prieta marked the last successful rise to power among the rival revolutionary armies and factions, and the creation of the first post-revolutionary governments. This book therefore marks the post-revolutionary period as beginning right after the successful Sonoran rising and considers the first decade after the Revolution to be 1920–30. While historical changes in the 1920s, 1930s, or beyond have explicitly referenced or been influenced by the Revolution, that does not mean they were part of the Revolution. Nor was everything that happened in Mexico in 1910–20 caused by, part of, or directly influenced by the Revolution.

To briefly summarize the key events of the Mexican Revolution is essential to analyzing the subsequent period.[10] The Revolution began after Madero, a liberal and bourgeois landowner from Coahuila, and his Anti-Reelectionist Party—with its slogan "sufragio efectivo, no reelección" (literally "effective suffrage, no reelection," or "a real vote and no boss rule")—could no longer continue their electoral campaign against Díaz for his seventh reelection in 1910.[11] Díaz had been in power for most of the years since 1876, but in 1908, he promised to retire and suggested a free election for 1910. However, Díaz ran for office again, repressed the anti-reelectionists and Madero's campaign, and claimed victory in the election of 1910.[12] On November 20, Madero, exiled in San Antonio, Texas, declared revolution against Díaz with his Plan de San Potosí.[13] Madero's call to arms initially failed, but in the following months, Maderista troops, especially in the north and in the state of Chihuahua, began to defeat Díaz's troops. This allowed Madero to negotiate for Díaz's resignation and for his own election in 1911. The Mexican Revolution might have ended then, but revolutionary and counterrevolutionary opposition to Madero's rule increased over the next few years.

Despite their initial support for Madero, Emiliano Zapata's forces in the southern state of Morelos declared their own revolution against Madero's government in 1911, introduced their demands for popular justice and agrarian reform with their Plan de Ayala, and began to organize their Ejército Libertador del Sur (Liberating Army of the South, ELS).[14] Members of the old regime's military meanwhile prepared to overthrow Madero with the support of the United States ambassador. They staged a fake war in Mexico City during "Ten Tragic Days" in February 1913, which allowed for a military coup by one of his generals, Victoriano Huerta. Huerta's overthrow and murder of Madero and his vice

president, as well as the establishment of a military dictatorship in 1913, ended Madero's revolution, but solidified and initiated other revolutionary movements. The largest and most important of these was Carranza's Constitutionalist Army. The Constitutionalists sought to reestablish Mexican sovereignty and the Constitution of 1857, which they considered to have been violated by Huerta's rise. The United States' subsequent opposition to Huerta and its military occupation of Veracruz in 1914 facilitated the defeat of Huerta's regime, which set the stage for negotiations between the remaining revolutionary forces at the Convention of Aguascalientes in 1914. The Aguascalientes convention declared itself sovereign that October with the powers of a deliberative assembly, but Carranza rejected the convention's sovereignty and disagreements between revolutionaries there led to the most violent phase of the Revolution. World War I, which began that July, added complex international and military alliances and conflicts to Mexico's regional, interregional, and national conflicts.

The Mexican Revolution was thereafter a series of civil wars between revolutionary armies and their approximately 160,000 troops for state power. Francisco "Pancho" Villa's División del Norte (Division of the North, DN) and its 50,000 troops broke away from Carranza's Constitutionalist Army, with its 80,000 troops. At Aguascalientes, Villa and the DN began an alliance with Zapata and the ELS, with its 20,000 troops, leaving 10,000 other troops to fight the larger revolutionary armies. This allowed for the briefly allied Villista-Zapatista, DN-ELS occupation of Mexico City in 1914–15. This occupation was the closest that popular forces got to power during the Mexican Revolution. The alliance did not last, ending any real chance for the popular exercise of state power during the Revolution. Carranza's subsequent wars with Villista and Zapatista troops, including after his faction's formal creation of a new state with Carranza's election and the framing of the constitution in 1917, placed them on the defensive and forced them into guerrilla warfare.[15] Multiple civil wars between revolutionary armies continued to fight for state power until Álvaro Obregón's faction overthrew Carranza in 1920, another election year. Other forces killed Carranza as he fled Mexico City. Carranza's repression of Obregón's campaign had provoked the Plan de Agua Prieta uprising that later overthrew Carranza.[16] However, instead of continuing the Mexican Revolution, Agua Prieta ended it. After Obregón won the rescheduled election of 1920, there were no more wars between revolutionary armies for state power. What characterized the Revolution of 1910–20 was no more. The Mexican Revolution caused an estimated 100,000 war casualties, and the national population declined due to emigration and the global influenza pandemic.

Some of the revolutionary forces had made significant demands for social reforms and justice, but not socialism. Struggles for popular social justice, exemplified by agrarian demands that the Zapatistas most explicitly and consistently expressed in and through their Plan de Ayala in 1911, were an important, but not dominant, part of the Revolution. The Villista and Zapatista forces did not win their demands, and they ultimately lost their struggles against bourgeois forces for state power represented by Carranza and, later, Obregón. The Constitution of 1917, framed by the Carrancistas, included provisions for important social reforms, such as Article 27 for land and other reforms and Article 123 for labor reforms, but it did not include Villista or Zapatista demands. Carrancistas killed Zapata in 1919, and Obregonistas killed Villa in 1923. Their revolutionary armies, Villa's DN and Zapata's ELS, also did not survive as independent forces. The capitalist class that was in power at the beginning the Revolution was the same class in power at its end. A different part of that same class, the capitalist faction from northwestern Mexico, established state power at the end of the Revolution in 1920. It set out to strengthen capitalism and the state, which involved managing the demands and threats of popular forces, as well as those of local and regional powers, the military, the Roman Catholic Church, the United States, and European powers. In short, the Mexican Revolution was nothing more, and nothing less, than a violent, decade-long bourgeois revolution.

The labor movement and the agrarian movement both suffered greatly during the Mexican Revolution. The revolutionary armies tended to subordinate and divide organizations within both movements, treat them as subsidiary forces for their own purposes and struggles, and keep them separate from or opposed to each other. As a result, the labor and agrarian movements did not gain much strength or form powerful alliances with each other during the Revolution. The most important and consistent representative of the agrarian movement during the Revolution, the ELS, was also the revolutionary army that most supported labor organizations and their demands and sometimes sought alliances with them. The best-known examples of conflicts and alliances between labor organizations and the revolutionary armies involved the anarchist Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World's Worker, COM), founded in Mexico City in 1912. Based on a secret agreement between Obregón, then under Carranza's command, and COM representatives in 1914, Obregón recruited Red Battalions from the COM to serve as armed troops for the Constitutionalists against the Villistas and Zapatistas in 1915.[17] Alignments between the Zapatistas and unions were less clear, and more powerful forces defeated them. The most important example of this involved the rise of the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas

(Mexican Union of Electrical Workers, SME), which represented Mexico City Light and Power workers. Some have suggested that the SME's creation in Mexico City during the DN-ELS occupation in 1914 involved a secret agreement with the Zapatistas.[18] This agreement may have continued after Carranza's re-occupation of the city in 1915, during which there were successful strikes for improved wages and working conditions that year and a general strike with the COM in Mexico City in 1916. Carranza and the Constitutionalists repressed the strike and then formally created the new state with Carranza's election and the Constitution in 1917. Further Carrancista military defeats of the Zapatistas prevented the ELS from providing much support to the SME or other unions. This also stopped other labor or agrarian forces from aligning with each other or forming any real or lasting alliances. Workers throughout the country rejected or ignored the Zapatistas; their most explicit appeals to attract labor unions to their agrarian cause failed in 1918.[19]

Workers and unions in other strategic industries like railroads also organized themselves and carried out their own strikes before the Revolution, but they were not successful at forming a nation-wide or industry-wide organization during the Revolution. Because the revolutionary armies needed the railroads to conduct war and transport troops, the struggles of railroad workers and their unions became intertwined with the demands of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary armies, which complicated their attempts at national organizing. They joined or allied with revolutionary armies by choice or by force. For example, some railroad workers deliberately and enthusiastically joined the Zapatistas and claimed military ranks within the ELS on their way to occupy Mexico City in 1914–15, while others seemed to have aligned with the Zapatistas more out of convenience than conviction and abandoned them during their defeats.[20]

Workers in some industries and places, like textile workers in the Orizaba Valley of Veracruz, had already formed strong labor associations before the Mexican Revolution and strengthened themselves during it.[21] The 1907 Río Blanco textile strike and massacre of strikers by Díaz's troops immortalized these workers but led to the destruction of some of their organizations. During, but not necessarily because of, the Revolution, Orizaba textile workers organized local unions and carried out important, successful strikes to improve their wages and working conditions in the mills. Textile workers found inspiration in the labor reforms in Article 123 of the Constitution of 1917. They eventually formed into a strong union federation, which later became the strongest regional and industrial organization within the country's main national labor confederation.

Attempts by many workers and unions to form a national labor confederation failed for most of the Revolution. Apart from the nationally important but regionally based ELS there was also no formal or lasting national agrarian organization during the Revolution. However, struggles during the Revolution gave rise to two state-allied labor and agrarian organizations that dominated early post-revolutionary Mexico. The labor organization was the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM), founded 1918 and led by a former anarchist COM and SME member, Luis N. Morones.[22] The agrarian group was the Partido Nacional Agrarista (National Agrarian Party, PNA), founded in 1920 and led by a former COM member and Zapatista, Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama.[23] Attempts to create a national labor confederation involved conflicts between anarchist and reformist union leaders that always reanimated past connections with revolutionary armies and factions, such as the COM's relations with the Carrancistas during the time of the Red Battalions and during the SME strike. Despite Carrancista sponsorship of the CROM's founding congress, the Carrancistas could not control the CROM. In 1919, the CROM created its own political party, the Partido Laborista Mexicano (Mexican Labor Party, PLM), to support Obregón's campaign against Carranza's candidate for the presidential election of 1920. The CROM and PLM also supported the Obregonistas and their successful Plan de Agua Prieta in 1920, as well as Obregón's election later that year. Support also came from the PNA, which was organized over a year after Zapata's assassination and days after the demobilization of the ELS.

The CROM and PNA, with their respective Revolutionary-era origins, were the dominant labor and agrarian organizations during the decade after the Mexican Revolution. They both provided the post-revolutionary Mexican state with organized popular support for fighting military uprisings and antagonizing the Catholic Church. They also gained important state positions. For example, the CROM's leader Morones led the Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo (Secretariat of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, SICT) during Plutarco Elías Calles's government in the latter part of the decade. The CROM held power, such as over the SICT's Departamento de Trabajo (Department of Labor, DT), founded by Madero in 1911, and over many of the labor conciliation and arbitration boards established by the Constitution of 1917. The CROM's PLM, one of the strongest national electoral parties, also won several legislative offices and governorships. The PNA's leader Soto y Gama became an important politician in the 1920s in support of the Mexican state's agrarian reform program. The PNA

remained allied to the state for most of the decade, but in stronger alliance with Obregón and his government than with Calles and his government. Overall, the PNA had less power than the CROM.

The CROM sought to represent the entire labor movement, and the PNA claimed to represent the entire agrarian movement. In reality, however, they only represented the state-allied parts of their respective movements. The CROM had members throughout Mexico and was most powerful among workers in Mexico City unions, textile unions in the Orizaba Valley of Veracruz, and some ports. It was weakest among workers in the most strategic national industries like railroads, mining, oil, and electricity. The CROM claimed to grow from 50,000 to 2 million members at its height later in the decade, but more realistic estimates placed its membership at about a tenth of these figures, at most only 13,000 dues-paying members. The PNA claimed millions who lived in rural communities and worked in agriculture but did not provide membership numbers. There were other confederations that remained organizationally and ideologically independent, such as the anarchist Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT), founded in 1921, and the Confederación Nacional Católica de Trabajo (National Catholic Labor Confederation, CNCT), founded in 1922.

Anarchist groups began to organize in late nineteenth-century Mexico. At the turn of the twentieth century, brothers Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón formed an anarchist and liberal Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party, PLM) against Díaz, but went into exile in the United States in 1903.[24] The PLM influenced some of the most important pre-revolutionary labor struggles, such as the Cananea mining strike of 1906 and the Río Blanco textile strike of 1907, both of which ended in massacres. While the Flores Magón brothers remained in exile during the Revolution, PLM members founded the COM. Among them were Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, who joined the Zapatistas in Morelos and later founded the PNA. After the COM's disintegration during the Revolution, anarchists failed to form or lead a dominant labor confederation. After several attempts to do so, anarchists finally created the CGT in militant opposition to capitalism, the Church, and the state, and its allied unions.[25] The CGT was strongest in Mexico City and represented bakery, tramway, telephone, and textile unions not affiliated with the CROM. It claimed over 50,000 members, but other estimates were one-fifth to one-half of that figure, and its membership declined through the decade. The Catholic unions found inspiration in the Church, Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical "Rerum Novarum" on capital and labor, and Catholic Action. They organized the CNCT in defense of religion,

family, the nation, private property, and cooperation between classes and against class struggle.[26] The CNCT began with approximately 20,000 members and declined to little more than a thousand at decade's end. Like the CROM and PNA, the CGT and CNCT failed to organize the strategic industrial workers or members of rural communities dedicated to agriculture in post-revolutionary Mexico. They also failed to challenge the CROM and PNA's dominance of the labor movement and the agrarian movement. Other organizations in both movements developed against the Mexican state and its allies.

This book examines how and why the most strategic, national, and independent parts of these movements struggled, and the most important results. These struggles took place from 1920 to 1930, during the governments of the Sonoran Presidents Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles and the provisional presidency of Emilio Portes Gil. This was a tumultuous and formative period in Mexican history that witnessed rapid demographic growth and economic development, the consolidation of the post-revolutionary state, the creation of a state-allied political party, and a cultural revolution. These years were also marked by popular discontent, bitter class conflicts, frequent military uprisings, and a violent religious war, the Cristero Rebellion of 1926–29. By rebelling, the Cristeros set the standard of resistance against which all other people's movements are compared, including those with very different demands, such as the Communist-led parts of the labor and agrarian movements examined in this book. In 1927–29, tremendous national and international crises challenged—but ultimately strengthened—the state and gave rise to its first allied party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR), founded in 1929. The PNR was the first of two antecedents of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), which was founded after World War II in 1946 and formally in power until 2000. The state and the party were empowered at the expense of people's movements. The Mexican Revolution generated many favorable conditions for movements, but it also created other adverse circumstances that increased the difficulties of their struggles.

CHAPTER 1

The Crises of Sovereignty and Power after the Revolution

All people's movements in Mexico after the Revolution faced serious challenges to their existence. Obstacles to unity were many: geographic, demographic, economic, class, and societal. These obstacles began with Mexico's varied geographic and ecological terrains, which encompassed the vast and arid north along the US-Mexico border; the more varied physical and climactic zones of the center and south, where populations were traditionally concentrated; and difficulties connecting transport routes from the northern to the southern and narrow Mexico-Guatemala border. Mexico's extensive Pacific and Gulf coastlines, facing toward the Caribbean Sea and beyond to the Atlantic Ocean, long presented problems for transport and communication between the coasts and borders. By the late nineteenth century, railroads had connected much of the nation and facilitated transport, trade, communication, and migration, but the differences and distances between the very distinctive regions remained great into the twentieth century. These were further exacerbated by the political divisions of the nation into over 2,000 municipalities, thirty-one states, and the federal district, each of which had their own traditions of autonomy since the end of the colonial era in the early nineteenth century.

Mexico presented overwhelming challenges for its labor and agrarian organizers. These challenges included the country's vast physical expanse and large population, divisions between the majority in rural areas and the minority in urban areas, divisions between the majority who worked in small-scale agriculture and the minority in nation's modern industries, and the attendant class divisions. The available population, industrial, and agricultural censuses all have their limitations, but allow for some estimates of the nation's size, proportions, and divisions. According to this data, the national population decreased from 15.16 million in 1910 to 14.33 million in 1921 but increased to 16.55 million by 1930.[1] While the overall population fluctuated, the economic, class, and social divisions remained roughly proportional immediately before, during, and after the Mexican Revolution.

Approximately 10–11 million people, or 70%, lived in rural areas in 1921–30.[2] The 1930 population census claimed that there were 71,779 localities of under 2,500 people, 67% of which had fewer than 100 people.[3] This census included many categories for localities, including *pueblo*, which could mean "people" or "village," and, as a restricted political category meaning village, it claimed there were only 5,209 pueblos in 1930.[4] The agrarian reform established by the 1915 Agrarian Law and Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution made pueblos and many other kinds of rural communities eligible to petition for land. The reform eventually centered on *ejidos*, communal-style lands that the Mexican state distributed to communities.[5] Communities could petition for ejidos as "restitution," referring to the return of previously lost land, or as "dotation," referring to distribution without a prior loss of land, and governors could approve and allow communities to obtain and constitute ejidos "provisionally," while only presidents could approve them "definitively." The Mexican state tended to distribute ejidos by dotation rather than by restitution to make communities more reliant on the state by denying them any claim of previous expropriation. In the early years of the agrarian reform, 1915–33, almost 15,000 communities petitioned for ejidos, but less than a third received them definitively by presidential decree, and very few received them in the form of restitution.[6] Mexico's post-revolutionary agrarian movement began to use the term *campesinos*, usually translated as "peasants," to refer to people who lived in the countryside, worked in agriculture, or sought to benefit from agrarian reform, without much clarity or consistency.

The fractured development of capitalism in Mexico meant there were few industrial workers in these years. These industrial workers were known as *obreros*, those in the wage-working, industrial part of the broader working class. The broader proletariat, or *el proletariado*, included wage workers without property whether or not they worked in and around machines, factories, or complex modern industries, in both rural and urban areas. Mexico's censuses at that time did not distinguish class from workforce, but their data on the workforce allow for estimates of the size of the industrial part of the broader working class. Within the workforce, which grew from 4.88 million in 1921 to 5.16 million in 1930, there were approximately 500,000 industrial wage workers in 1930.[7] This was a small fraction of the workforce compared to the 3.53 million, or 70%, who worked in agriculture. The agricultural part of the workforce encompassed people of many classes, such as small property owners, sharecroppers, tenant farmers, day laborers, and over half a million *ejidatarios*, heads of families who received and worked on ejidos.[8] Most of the agricultural workforce was landless, above all the 2.7 million

that the census categorized as *jornaleros*, or "day laborers" who were people that did short-term and informal agricultural labor on someone else's land.[9]

The strategic and economic power of industrial workers was vastly disproportionate to their numerical size and to that of agricultural workers. As one index of this disproportion, the total value of all industrial production, including transportation, was $900 million pesos, almost double the value of all agricultural products ($458 million pesos).[10] In strategic terms, industrial workers, especially those who belonged to independent unions in Mexico's most strategic national industries, like railroads, mining, oil, electricity, and ports, had unusual power. Because of their industrially and technically strategic positions at work, they were able to win their demands by asserting their capacity to maintain or stop power, production, communication, or transportation, such as during strikes, which could then disrupt or stop production in other industries or parts of the economy.[11]

These divisions and differences created tremendous difficulties for the organizers of the labor movement and the agrarian movement and significantly challenged attempts to form alliances between them in post-revolutionary Mexico. Unity between movements faced the additional obstacles of state crises, military rebellions, a religious war, and ideological struggles. This chapter offers an overview of the main contexts, conflicts, and divisions of early post-revolutionary Mexico by focusing on the state crises and the key the intellectual and ideological qualities of the era.

Crises

Several post-revolutionary state crises began in the years 1920–26 and became more serious in 1927–29, especially in 1928.[12] Formally created in 1917, the post-revolutionary Mexican state that faced these crises consisted of the state apparatus, a special repressive force, and the government that formally controlled the state apparatus. The accumulation, explosion, and resolution of state crises occurred during the governments of the Sonoran Presidents Álvaro Obregón in 1920–24 and Plutarco Elías Calles in 1924–28, and the Provisional President Emilio Portes Gil in 1928–30. Obregón, Calles, and other members of their northwestern revolutionary faction rose to power with the Rebellion of Agua Prieta in April 1920. They named one of their own, Adolfo de la Huerta, supreme chief of the rebellion and overthrew then-president Venustiano Carranza, who favored his own candidate, Ignacio Bonillas, against Obregón in the presidential election scheduled for July 1920. In conflict with rival conspirators, de la Huerta convened the Congress in May, which elected him provisional president.

After rivals killed Carranza during his escape from Mexico City later in May, the northwestern faction rescheduled elections for September. Obregón emerged victorious and began his term as president in December.

Obregón and Calles, growers of chickpeas and sugarcane, respectively, came from only one part of a nationally weak capitalist class. The Sonorans' attempts to develop capitalism, consolidate the state, and protect their vision of national sovereignty generated numerous conflicts. These conflicts included a serious religious war during which many class and cross-class struggles continued and many international disputes intensified. These significant threats forced the Sonorans to develop and deploy long-term solutions of governance that bolstered capitalism, state power, and sovereignty. The most visible and enduring of these solutions was the creation of a national, state-allied party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR), in 1929.

The Mexican state faced increasing international threats after World War I and the Mexican Revolution.[13] The United States did not again intervene militarily in Mexico, but it was a possibility, and US invasions and occupations of nearby Caribbean and Central American countries threatened Mexican sovereignty. American, British, and other imperialists meanwhile competed with each other and exerted tremendous power over Mexico. These powers made important financial investments, held public and private debt, and owned and managed major private properties and companies in Mexico.[14] They used their strength over banking and nationally strategic industries like railroads, mining, and oil to accumulate capital, which lead to several disputes with the Mexican state.[15] In response to US demands for damages to property claimed during the Revolution, the Mexican government later entered into several debt-repayment agreements. During Obregón's presidency, this acquiescence facilitated US diplomatic recognition in 1923. Especially during Calles's presidency, the United States threatened military intervention against the application of Mexico's 1917 Constitution, which might have affected American investments, especially US control of oil properties. These threats diminished when Calvin Coolidge, president of the United States between 1923 and 1929, removed James R. Sheffield, a belligerent ambassador to Mexico in 1924–27, and appointed Dwight W. Morrow, a conciliatory ambassador to Mexico. Morrow served in this position from 1927 to 1930, into the term of Herbert Hoover, president of the United States during 1929–33. Morrow improved US-Mexican relations and created greater stability and conditions more favorable for debt payments.

The Mexican state also faced major economic threats before the Great Depression.[16] The Mexican economic recession of 1926–29 led to a 3.7% fall in Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) and a decline in the value of exports from $334 to $275 million US American dollars, including declines in manufacturing and oil production. The Great Depression exacerbated the situation. GDP fell a further 21.1% in 1929–32 before a recovery later in the 1930s and did not return to 1929 levels until 1934. These economic threats reduced the capacity of Mexican state leaders to govern and manage internal challenges including discontent within the military, which rebelled in 1923, 1927, and 1929.[17] Growing conflict between church and state during the Calles presidency also led to a serious religious war. The resulting Cristero Rebellion of 1926–29 took over 90,000 lives, added a quarter million emigrants, reduced the contents of the treasury by nearly half, and initiated deleterious international negotiations with the United States, international institutions, and the Roman Catholic Church. These challenges threatened Mexican state sovereignty and aggravated the Mexican state political crises, especially over governance and succession.

Independent labor and agrarian organizations challenged the state in their own ways. The great railroad strike of 1927, carried out by the Communist-led Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (Confederation of Transportation and Communication Workers, CTC), was an important example of the ways unionized workers challenged the state. The CTC struck Mexico's largest and wealthiest international company, the Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México (National Railways of Mexico, FNM), in which the state was the majority investor. The strike threatened to spread to other valuable and strategic nationally and internationally owned companies in industries like mining and oil, whose workers and unions might have initiated similar strikes. In response, Calles was forced to adjust the state's legal and institutional relationships with the labor movement to manage such conflicts. The CTC strike also initiated the decline of the state's most important ally in the labor movement, the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM). The strike forced Calles to support a strategic national company and allied unions against their rivals on strike, which reduced the credibility of his supposedly pro-labor government, built on its alliance with the CROM. Like the Cristero Rebellion, the CTC railroad strike of 1927 sharpened divisions between Obregón, Calles, and their respective allies, including the Partido Nacional Agrarista (National Agrarian Party, PNA) and the CROM. These divisions worsened the Mexican state's condition and its popular alliances during the succession crises associated with the election of 1928.

In the context of these conflicts involving the labor movement and the decline of the state's allied agrarian organization, the PNA, the agrarian leagues joined

in the Liga Nacional Campesina (National Peasant League, LNC) in 1926. The LNC succeeded in replacing the official—but declining—PNA. In 1927–29, the LNC, CTC, and other organizations led by members of Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, PCM) began to unite. They gave rise to other independent labor and agrarian organizations like the Bloque Obrero y Campesino Nacional (National Worker and Peasant Bloc, BOCN), which attempted to challenge the main solutions to the state's most significant political crises, including its creation of the PNR. The BOCN and similar organizations were founded in response to the decline of the state-allied labor and agrarian organizations like the CROM and PNA. Faced with this array of organizations, leaders of the Mexican state had to decide whether to reconstruct popular alliances with different parts of the labor and agrarian movements or instead, to antagonize them. In the end, rather than revive the kinds of alliances it had previously built with the CROM and PNA the state leaders considered the later organizations adversaries and set out to ruin them. State violence against these organizations further divided and debilitated the labor and agrarian movements, including both state-allied and independent parts.

The post-revolutionary state's most important political crisis involved three major succession crises in the ten years after the Mexican Revolution. Obregón's rise to power through a violent uprising on the eve of the 1920 presidential election presaged similarly violent contestations of the elections of 1924, 1928, and 1929. In 1923, military conspirators began an uprising to overthrow the Obregón government and stop Calles's campaign for succession under the nominal leadership of their former compatriot, Adolfo de la Huerta. Almost half of the army rebelled but failed to overthrow the Obregón government. This allowed Obregón to stay in power for the remainder of his term and for Calles to win the election of 1924.

Obregón first clarified his intention to run for reelection in 1928 when he influenced his congressional bloc in 1926 to amend the 1917 Constitution to allow for nonconsecutive presidential reelection and to extend the presidential term from four to six years.[18] From then on, it was clear that Obregón would attempt to reclaim power.[19] Calles did not openly oppose Obregón's succession, but Luis N. Morones, the CROM leader and secretary of industry in Calles's cabinet, did. Morones, the CROM, and its political agency, the PLM, had originally organized to support Obregón for the election of 1920, but turned hostile to his campaign for the election of 1928. Obregón also faced opposition from the army, the Catholic Church, and politicians who favored a literal reading of Madero's "no reelection" slogan for the election of 1910, supported by Article 83

of Carranza's 1917 Constitution.[20] Obregón's reelection plans were nonetheless backed by many labor and agrarian organizations, which especially favored his promise to extend agrarian reforms and distribute more ejidos. Among his most vocal proponents were legislators, including Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, and the PNA. Obregón's appeals to industrial workers, especially to those outside of and opposed to CROM, like the CTC railroad workers, expanded his potential working-class voter base and political constituency. Obregón's revolutionary language and promises also won him support from other independent labor and agrarian organizations that were opposed to Calles, Morones, and their allies. Calles could not legally run for successive reelection, but the continuity of his alliance with Morones suggested Calles might try to outmaneuver and subvert Obregón's campaign.

The absence of any real electoral opposition to Obregón meant he would likely win any presidential contest. Two generals formerly allied to Obregón and under his command, Arnulfo R. Gómez and Francisco R. Serrano, each ran opposition campaigns in 1927 but their campaigns were doomed.[21] On the pretext of their presumed rebellion, the Calles regime captured and summarily executed Gómez and Serrano and massacred their entourages in October–November 1927. After assassination attempts on Obregón by Catholic militants that November, the Calles government carried out summary executions of the accused, including Jesuit priest Miguel Agustín Pro, his brother, and others.[22] This did not stop further Catholic assassination attempts into the election year. These violent actions, which all took place during the Cristero Rebellion, contributed to post-election violence. In the spring of 1928, Morones publicly antagonized Obregón, but did not run a campaign against him, and the CROM's PLM ended up endorsing Obregón.[23] On Sunday, July 1, 1928, Obregón won the presidential election unopposed.[24]

After receiving news of his election victory at his home in Sonora, Obregón arrived in Mexico City on Sunday, July 15. He disregarded warnings by his aides to delay going to the capital until the inauguration day in December. Given opposition from anti-reelectionists, members of the military, Catholic militants, and Morones, if not Calles himself, Obregón's associates had good reason to expect threats to him. The house of a Capuchin abbess, Concepción Acevedo y de la Llata, "La Madre Conchita," was a magnet for the city's Catholic resistance.[25] La Madre Conchita held underground masses and used her home as meeting site for urban Catholic supporters of the rural Cristeros, such as members of the Liga Nacional de Defensa de la Libertad Religiosa (National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, LNDLR), founded in 1925.

Among La Madre Conchita's followers was José de León Toral, a member of the LNDLR and a former associate of the Pro brothers.[26] Apparently with Conchita's blessing, Toral began to follow Obregón upon his arrival in Mexico City and attended a celebration of his electoral victory at La Bombilla restaurant on July 17. Posing as a sketch artist, Toral approached Obregón at his banquet table, then shot and killed him at close range.[27] Obregón's aides captured Toral, who eventually led agents to Conchita's home, where security forces arrested her and others. After standing trial in November, Toral was executed by firing squad in February 1929. Conchita, who denied any role in the murder, was condemned to a twenty-year prison sentence, at a penal colony in May 1929. It is not clear why Catholic militants perceived a greater threat from the more conciliatory Obregón than the more hostile Calles. Regardless of motivation, the assassination of President-elect Obregón created the main crisis for Mexico's early post-revolutionary state.

Solutions

Calles immediately responded to Obregón's death with a series of pronouncements and by devising solutions to keep the crisis under control.[28] Obregonista generals delayed plans for rebellion, which gave Calles and his group time to organize a military defense. Obregón's most vocal civilian supporters, the PNA Agraristas, led by Soto y Gama and Aurelio Manrique, meanwhile blamed Calles and Morones for the crime, rather than the Catholic underground.[29] These accusations forced Calles to accept the resignation of Morones and other Laborista officials from his government. Morones had threatened to resign before the election, but accusations of his complicity in the assassination forced an earlier departure. These resignations further reduced CROM/PLM power within and outside of the state and removed the primary labor movement basis of support for Calles's "labor" government. The PNA leaders' accusations also led to their own political demise. While the Agrarista leaders joined other Obregonistas in pressuring for an interim president, their refusal to support any choice involving Calles's assent contributed to their decline.[30] Obregón's assassination hastened the decline of the previously official and dominant labor and agrarian organizations, opening the field for their independent rivals.

On September 1, 1928, Calles delivered a speech to the National Congress, broadcast by radio throughout Mexico, offering solutions to the many state crises arising from Obregón's death.[31] Addressing himself to what he called the "Revolutionary Family," an imagined genealogy of the Mexican Revolution's

survivors that he sought to preside over as its patriarch, Calles's aimed to secure "the salvation of the nation" against "conservative groups" and "the political and clerical reaction."[32] He probably meant the Cristeros, urban Catholic groups, the Catholic Church, and his other political and military opponents. Appropriating the language of the labor and agrarian movements and attempting to retain their support, Calles praised "the proletarian masses of town and country."[33]

By opposing rule by *caudillos*, ambitious, mobile, and militaristic leaders who were strong in states and regions, Calles implicitly criticized Obregón, as well as military, gubernatorial, and other regional opponents. He proposed "to definitively orient the nation's politics through paths toward a true institutional life."[34] This emphasis on "institutionalization" became a dominant theme in Mexican politics from then on. Calles summarized this approach with the slogan "from the country of one man, to a nation of institutions and laws." He offered three concrete political solutions: First, he would step down at the end of his term that November and never return to the presidency. Second, Congress would choose a provisional president to serve after his term expired. Third, Congress would schedule a new presidential election for a candidate to complete the term Obregón would have served.

These solutions were intended to delay a likely military rebellion and disown the suggestion by former Veracruz governor Adalberto Tejeda and others to prolong Calles's term. They were also meant to demonstrate support for civilian over military power in the determination of future presidential successions. While the speech did not provide definitive solutions to Mexico's state crises, it did allow Calles's group to protect the state and capitalism in the short term. The creation of different institutions of politics and governance also fortified the state and capitalism in the long term.

The compromise choice for interim president was lawyer Emilio Portes Gil, governor of Tamaulipas since 1925.[35] That August, Calles elevated Portes Gil to the top position in his cabinet, the Secretary of Governance (Gobernación). Portes Gil was an enemy of both Morones and the CROM, and his promotion was a sign of future trouble for the CROM. Legislators followed through with Calles's suggestions and on September 25, 1928, chose Portes Gil to serve as provisional president starting in December. They rescheduled the presidential election for November 1929, with the presidential term to begin in February 1930.[36]

Politicians allied to Calles meanwhile materialized an allusion in his speech to "the establishment of real, organic national parties to regulate our political life" by planning for a national political party to represent the state and its growing capitalist class.[37] On December 1, the day of Portes Gil's inauguration,

Calles, Aarón Sáenz, Luis L. León, and other leading politicians announced the creation of the PNR.[38] They later invited delegates to the PNR founding convention in Querétaro, held on March 1–4, 1929. The goals of the PNR were to centralize national state power for Mexico's rising capitalist class and thus ensure its political dominance and hegemony; to organize the rival warring factions under Calles's leadership after Obregón's death; to nationalize, control, and unite the local and regional politicians and the military; to formalize and manage national presidential elections for the state with an allied party; and to crystallize the continuity of Mexican state dedication to and protection of capitalism. All this was done in the name of the "Mexican Revolution" and the "Revolutionary Family."[39]

Despite Calles's acclaim for the "proletarian masses of town and country," it became clear that the PNR would exclude, repress, and destroy independent labor, agrarian, and other people's movements and organizations that had arisen in the previous years and backed Obregón's campaign. The PNR would be the national, state-allied party for the national strengthening of the bourgeoisie but would not ally with popular classes and their representative organizations such as the rapidly declining CROM or the PNA. The crises and their resolutions had enduring legacies for Mexico, the state, and class alignments and conflicts long after the specific crises in the state's early post-revolutionary existence. The best known "institutional" result was the PNR's post-war successor, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI).

Additional changes after Calles's speech also had important immediate results. During his brief term as Secretary of Governance, Portes Gil had followed Obregón's practice of attacking the CROM and attempted to form alliances with its opponents. The first serious move in this direction was Portes Gil's opening of a Convención Obrero-Patronal (Worker-Employer Convention), held in November and December of 1928. The convention's goal was similar to the labor and conciliation boards provided for by the 1917 Constitution: to "conciliate" representatives of labor and capital and to form a federal labor law.[40] The meeting further disempowered CROM while empowering independent labor organizations and business associations.

Apart from the Worker-Employer Convention, the most lasting damage to the CROM began with its responses to a play staged by union theater actors who had recently left the CROM.[41] *El Desmoronamiento de Morones* ("The Decadence of Morones"), which opened in Mexico City that fall, portrayed Morones and CROM leaders as debauched and degraded representatives of workers. Delegates to CROM's ninth convention in early December 1928 responded by passing

a resolution for Portes Gil to stop the performance. When Portes Gil refused the CROM's request, Morones publicly attacked him and plans to create the PNR, but failed to secure Calles's intervention in defense of the CROM. This led the CROM to withdraw from the Worker-Employer Convention and to resign from all remaining positions within the government. From then on, the CROM's political and union power disintegrated and it went into near total decline. While the CROM's membership was much smaller than its stated count—as low as a tenth of its claimed numbers—the CROM claimed to have lost a million members, half of its membership, over the next four years.

The CROM's decline had major political implications beyond ending its historic alliance with the Mexican state. Most importantly, it forced Calles to alter his relationship with the state and, once it was formed, the state-allied party. After praising the CROM at its convention, Calles responded to its attacks on Portes Gil and the PNR by fully breaking with Morones and the CROM. Similar to his promise to step down from the presidency in his September 1928 speech to congress, Calles also stepped down from the presidency of the future PNR, and promised to "absolutely and definitively retire from political life."[42]

After Mexican state leaders organized the PNR and defeated an attempted military takeover known as the Escobar Rebellion the following spring, Calles declared the "political failure of the Revolution."[43] His view of the continuity of the Mexican Revolution was misleading because, by then, the Revolution had been over for almost a decade. The post-revolutionary state had successfully survived its main crises. When Mexico's economy went into further decline during the Great Depression, Calles continued to manage power from behind the scenes, but the political solutions enacted earlier allowed the state to endure and survive later crises and threats to its sovereignty.

The state crises continually divided the labor and agrarian movements and made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to operate independently of the state or form alliances with one another. None of the people's movements in early post-revolutionary Mexico were able to successfully respond to the crises that faced the state or its largest change in governance: the creation of a centralized state-allied party, the PNR, to manage elections and political rivals from the local to national levels. None could develop any political party, organization, or institution to effectively rival the PNR. Most successful at the time were the Cristeros, who fought the anti-clerical laws and actions of the Calles government, as well as its attacks on the Catholic Church. State forces could not defeat the Cristeros militarily, and only after state leaders founded the PNR could they form a truce with the Cristeros. The Cristeros resisted the creation of an

organized movement or political party that could compete with the PNR, but even without formal organization, they set the standard for movement resistance against the state.

The more extensively and formally organized labor and agrarian movements were divided into many rival organizations and were much less unified than the Cristeros in their responses to the rising power of the Mexican state. Even though parts of both the labor and agrarian movements had formed important alliances with the state, none of those alliances survived the state crises. Unlike the Cristeros, the labor and agrarian movements were never in a position to begin a war, revolution, or even a rebellion against the state, and they could barely unite or create alliances with each other, much less form a sustained resistance. The intellectual, ideological, and political qualities of the time contributed significantly to their inability to develop a unified response or strategy to the state crises.

Ideologies

After the Mexican Revolution, the intellectual influences on state leaders and their ideological struggles varied greatly.[44] Intellectuals who held high political offices attempted to carry out a cultural revolution, and they emphasized race and educational reforms in their project to recreate the Mexican nation. Many other politicians, from governors to presidents, emphasized liberalism, nationalism, anti-clericalism and, to a lesser extent, agrarian reform, and economic and social reforms. State-allied intellectuals and politicians in the early post-revolutionary era consciously drew from diverse intellectual, ideological, and political traditions in Mexican history. They especially valued those traditions associated with Mexican liberalism that found clearest expression in the Constitution of 1857. Their influences ranged from Benito Juárez's liberalism of the mid-nineteenth century to Francisco I. Madero's anti-reelectionism of the early twentieth century. Their ideologies were located within broader cultural contexts in which uniquely Mexican representations of death cultures became ascendant in the aftermath of the Revolution. One clear indication of Revolutionary and post-revolutionary era reliance on nineteenth-century liberalism was the fact that the official title of the 1917 Constitution referred to itself as a reform of the 1857 Constitution.[45]

There was no unified or coherent state ideology in the 1920s, but state-allied politicians tended to adopt and adapt liberal and reformist ideas from the past that they considered nationalist, progressive, radical, revolutionary, and

sometimes even socialist. However, their ideas and practices were not very radical or revolutionary by international standards of the time, nor very reformist even by the national standards that they claimed to represent. In general, these politicians were not anti-capitalist in theory or practice. Other politicians moved in clearly conservative directions and explicitly embraced capitalism. By the latter half of the 1920s, the state leaders and state allies increased attacks on the Catholic Church and the Cristeros, moved away from their earlier social and cultural reformism, and promoted nationalism to overcome their crises and strengthen capitalism and the state. They were initially tolerant toward the state-allied and state-controlled parts of the labor and agrarian movements and hostile toward their independent parts, but they eventually antagonized both parts of both movements.

Among the most important ideas for politicians and intellectuals interested in the "social question" and social reform after the Mexican Revolution were those of positivist intellectual Andrés Molina Enríquez, author of a major pre-revolutionary work, *Los grandes problemas nacionales* (1909).[46] Trained as a lawyer, Molina Enríquez was a judge and notary public in Mexico State. During the Revolution, he strongly influenced a fellow lawyer and associate, Luis Cabrera, and his production of agrarian reform laws including the Agrarian Law of 1915 that came into effect under Venustiano Carranza. This law served as the basis for the sections of Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917 on agrarian reform, which Molina Enríquez helped to author. Molina Enríquez advised state leaders during and after the Revolution, and his ideas on agrarian reform and its eventual centerpiece, the ejido, continued to have an important influence on reform, state leaders, and state-allied intellectuals long after the Revolution.

The dominant state-allied intellectual and self-proclaimed philosopher in early post-revolutionary Mexico was lawyer José Vasconcelos.[47] Vasconcelos was originally from Oaxaca but grew up near the US-Mexico border in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, went to school in Eagle Pass, Texas, and then attended high school and law school in Mexico City. In the capital, he joined an intellectual youth group opposed to positivism and literary and cultural modernism, Ateneo de la Juventud (Youth Athenaeum), founded in 1909. A supporter of Madero and the Anti-Reelectionist Party before and during the Revolution, Vasconcelos gained immense intellectual and cultural influence in its aftermath. While leading the Secretariat of Public Education and managing public education and cultural affairs under Obregón in 1921–24, Vasconcelos launched a cultural revolution that sought to reform and recreate the Mexican nation. The cultural revolution included several educational infrastructure projects such as building schools,

publishing textbooks, running literacy campaigns, and encouraging rural education by missionary teachers. The cultural revolution also sponsored revolutionary visual art painted by muralists such as Diego Rivera. Vasconcelos was the most important proponent of *mestizaje*, a process and ideology of racial mixture that in his version favored *mestizos*. Mestizo was the term for people of Indigenous American and European descent in the Spanish colonial system of *castas*, or categories of racial mixture. In modern Mexico, mestizo took on a sense of mixture that did not necessarily recognize Mexico's diverse African, Asian, European, and Indigenous American origins and mixtures thereof. In his book *La raza cósmica* (1925), Vasconcelos celebrated mestizaje and proclaimed mestizos as the race or people of the future in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Another state-allied intellectual, archaeologist, and anthropologist, Manuel Gamio was critical to the development of Mexican mestizaje and nationalism.[48] Gamio was also instrumental to the propagation of *indigenismo*, an ideology that gained greatest strength in Mexico and Peru. In his book *Forjando patria* (1916), Gamio developed a Mexican indigenismo that sought to valorize indigenous, especially pre-colonial, contributions to Mexico as a nation. At the same time, he called for indigenous people to incorporate into a homogenous national mestizo race, which he considered to be necessary for the creation of a genuine Mexican nationality. Vasconcelos's and Gamio's intellectual work in favor of mestizaje, indigenismo, and nationalism was not socialist or deliberately critical of capitalism but instead led them to devise enduring variants of racism. By the late 1920s, Vasconcelos and Gamio entered into conflicts with the Calles government and therefore they did not hold powerful political positions. In 1929, Vasconcelos countered the PNR with an independent presidential campaign and threatened to ally with the Cristeros.

In the second half of the 1920s, under Calles's influence, the dominant ideas of state leaders and allies became strongly anti-clerical. The post-revolutionary governors exemplified this trend. Many governors after the Revolution called themselves socialists, considered their reforms to be radical, and mobilized movements in their states to strengthen their regional power, usually for anti-clerical purposes.[49] An important example of this trend was Salvador Alvarado, a member of the northwestern revolutionary faction that governed the southeastern state of Yucatán during the Revolution. In 1916, Alvarado formed a Socialist Party in Yucatán that later gave rise to the reformist governorship of Felipe Carrillo Puerto and his resistance leagues. Governors in other states with similar anti-clerical and reformist tendencies included Tomás Garrido Canabál in Tabasco, Francisco J. Múgica and Lázaro Cárdenas in Michoacán, Manuel

Pérez Treviño in Coahuila, Emilio Portes Gil in Tamaulipas, Adalberto Tejeda and Heriberto Jara in Veracruz, Genaro V. Vásquez in Oaxaca, Carlos Vidal in Chiapas, and José Guadalupe Zuno in Jalisco.

Most of these self-proclaimed radical and socialist governors had military backgrounds and had usually supported Carranza or were Constitutionalists during the Revolution. They exhibited different forms of anti-clericalism after the Revolution, ranging from demands to reform the Catholic Church clergy to extremely violent opposition to the Church, Catholics, and their symbols. Each also had different relationships and responses to the rule of Obregón and Calles. Some strongly supported only Obregón or Calles, others joined military rebellions against either or both, and others managed alliances with both. In the final category were Portes Gil, the future provisional president, and Pérez Treviño, first president of the PNR. Despite their many differences, these governors were similar to Calles in that they tended to prioritize anti-clericalism over their other intellectual, ideological, or political positions. They focused more on efforts to antagonize the church and the faithful than supporting agrarian, labor, or educational reform, or the cultural revolution that Vasconcelos had promoted. These governors sometimes used anti-capitalist rhetoric, but they were not usually anti-capitalist in practice, and they usually opposed the operation of movements and organizations outside of their direct regional control.

The politicians and movement leaders most involved with labor and agrarian reform institutions shared many intellectual and ideological qualities with other politicians of the era. These politicians were also strongly anti-clerical and opposed to people's movements and organizations independent of the state. Many had been anarchists before or during the Revolution, from which they drew their anti-clericalism, even if they stopped associating with anarchism after the Revolution. For example, Antonio I. Villarreal was involved with the anarchist Flores Magón brothers and their Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party, PLM) before the Revolution and was infamously anti-clerical during the Revolution.[50] Villarreal led the Secretariat of Agriculture in the early 1920s, before rebelling against Obregón. The most vocal proponent of agrarian reform after the Revolution, Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama of the PNA, had also been an anarchist PLM member before the Revolution.[51] During the Revolution, he was a founder of the anarchist Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World's Worker, COM) and later joined the Zapatistas. Soto y Gama supported the Obregón regime and later opposed the Calles regime before allying with his former collaborator, Villarreal, against Calles's group.

Luis N. Morones, leader of the CROM and Secretary of Industry under Calles, was the best-known representative of the labor movement. Although he was also a veteran of the anarchist COM, Morones later disassociated himself with anarchism and opposed all independent unions.[52] He instead followed the examples of the US-based American Federation of Labor (AFL) and its leader, Samuel Gompers, and of the British Labour Party. Morones's moderate labor reformism depended on a close alliance with the Mexican state, to the benefit of the CROM and for his own personal enrichment. In 1925, Morones even sponsored a schismatic Iglesia Católica Apostólica Mexicana (Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church, ICAM), which favored the Mexican state against the Roman Catholic Church.[53] Despite their prior anarchist backgrounds, agrarian and labor reformists and leaders like Villarreal, Soto y Gama, and Morones formed important state alliances to support their personal careers and reform agendas, often in an anti-clerical direction. As movement leaders closely allied to the state, Soto y Gama and Morones were particularly antagonistic toward movements and organizations that sought autonomy from the state.

The most exceptional intellectual of state-allied movements was Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a CROM labor leader, educational reformer, and politician through the 1920s.[54] He was the CROM's education secretary in 1923–32, briefly served as governor of Puebla in 1924–25, and was a federal congressional representative in 1925–28 for the PLM. Like so many of the dominant intellectuals of the era, Lombardo Toledano was a lawyer. He practiced and taught law, was director of the National Preparatory School, and studied under philosopher Antonio Caso. Like Vasconcelos, Caso was an anti-positivist member of the Ateneo de la Juventud. Caso and Vasconcelos had strong influences on Lombardo Toledano's early intellectual development, but he later broke with both of them. Lombardo Toledano worked for Vasconcelos in the Secretariat of Public Education in the early 1920s, and began to engage with Marxism, but attacked anarchism and Communism, supported the CROM's reformism, and upheld a Christian ethics partly drawn from Caso. In the mid-1920s, Lombardo Toledano publicly opposed Marxism for ideological reasons, and then in the late 1920s denied any ideology whatsoever. However, as a politician he strongly argued for compliance with the 1917 Constitution, specifically the legal protections for labor rights in Article 123. He also developed a liberal humanism and socialism that drew from Marxism but argued for a more efficient capitalism. Lombardo Toledano was probably the most genuine and sincere labor reformist in the 1920s. However, his intellectual, ideological, legal, political, and philosophical wavering exemplified

the difficulties state-allied reformist intellectuals had in developing a clear or consistent position on capitalism and people's movements. In practice, between the Revolution and the Depression, Lombardo Toledano's liberal positions were limited to support for the state-allied part of the labor movement that he belonged to, which meant opposition to the parts of the labor movement that were independent of the state.

Later, in the 1930s, Lombardo Toledano left the CROM and disavowed the ideological and political positions that he held in the 1920s. He became a prominent Marxist, a supporter of the Soviet Union, and a proponent of the Comintern's Popular Front against Fascism and War. He was Mexico's main labor leader and founder of the dominant labor confederation, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Workers of Mexico, CTM). His labor leadership made him a powerful politician during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, who was in office from 1934 to 1940. Lombardo Toledano joined with other leftist politicians in the 1940s such as Narciso Bassols, former ambassador to the USSR, and Víctor Manuel Villaseñor, former leader of Mexico's Friends of the Soviet Union affiliate, to create and lead the Partido Popular (Popular Party, PP), later the Partido Popular Socialista (Popular Socialist Party, PPS).

Crucially, other powerful intellectuals and politicians began to move in more conservative and explicitly capitalist directions in the 1920s. This was the case for Manuel Gómez Morin, who later became Mexico's dominant conservative intellectual and politician.[55] Gómez Morin studied law with Lombardo Toledano, also followed Caso, practiced and taught law, and was director of the National Law School in the 1920s. He gained economic experience working in the Secretariat of Finance (Hacienda) and later became the first president of the Bank of Mexico, created by Calles as the nation's central bank in 1925. In contrast to Lombardo Toledano, who defended unions, Gómez Morin built a powerful legal practice that defended banks and companies. Gómez Morin supported Vasconcelos's campaign for president against Calles and the PNR in 1929, and, a decade later, he founded Mexico's main conservative party, the Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN), in 1939.

In the 1920s, Gómez Morin clearly and openly supported the attempts by post-revolutionary state leaders to centralize capital and promote capitalist economic development through a modern banking system, as well as through private enterprise beyond the state or any given government. Compared to politicians like Lombardo Toledano, Morones, and Soto y Gama, who defended their state-allied labor and agrarian organizations and the state-promoted social reforms, Gómez Morin and other politicians developed conservative positions to

defend capitalism inside and outside of the state against movements. They also used state institutions to benefit from capitalism by investing in or creating their own private companies. For example, Aarón Sáenz led the Secretariat of Foreign Relations under Calles, was briefly governor of Nuevo León, and was Obregón's campaign manager for the election of 1928.[56] His government connections allowed him to become a major capitalist in the sugar industry and in a variety of industries in Monterrey. Likewise, Abelardo L. Rodríguez was able, while governor of Baja California for most of the 1920s, to accumulate great wealth and fortune through his public and private ventures and investments, including in casinos. He later served as president of Mexico in 1932–34.[57]

State-allied politicians and intellectuals in the early years after the Mexican Revolution held a variety of intellectual and ideological positions, from Vasconcelos's promotion of mestizaje during the cultural revolution of the early 1920s to Calles's anti-clerical campaign in the late 1920s. They tended to consider liberalism necessary for the subsequent development of Mexican nationalism, but they could not agree on how to recreate Mexico as a nation. Most assumed the necessity of state power over people's movements. The labor and agrarian leaders Morones and Soto y Gama played important roles in the state's assertion of power over movements. The post-revolutionary varieties of Mexican liberalism and nationalism made it difficult for representatives of the independent parts of the labor and agrarian movements to develop a consistent criticism of capitalism or the state, for socialism.[58]

The same liberal and nationalist ideologies, and the state projects that those ideologies influenced, including social reforms, the cultural revolution, and anti-clerical attacks on the Catholic Church, gave rise to the most powerful people's movement of the era, the Cristeros.[59] Calles's anti-clerical campaign increased the importance of Catholicism, including the theology of Church hierarchs like the Archbishop of Mexico José Mora y del Río and the Archbishop of Morelia Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, of urban Catholic Action activists, of the Cristeros themselves. In the absence of broader clerical or lay control, state antagonism of the Church fortified the Cristeros' faith in scripture and their own spiritual understandings, which prepared the way for a distinctly rural, regional, and religious resistance to the state. The personal and local reasons for rebellion varied much, but their Catholicism served as a unifying source of revolt and moved the Cristeros to face the state and the military on their own. By contrast, the labor and agrarian movements were never close to a unified overall response to the state or its crises and remained divided in their intellectual, ideological, and political influences and strategies of struggle.

CHAPTER 2

The Rise of People's Movements and Organizations of Struggle

THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS THAT grew in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution consisted of many different organizations of struggle, each with different relationships to the Revolution, the post-revolutionary state, and each other. Many organizations in the labor movement, especially the railroad unions, originated before the Revolution. The agrarian leagues, which eventually dominated the agrarian movement, formed only after the Revolution. Both movements divided between state-allied and independent organizations. The independent organizations did not necessarily belong to another local, regional, or national association, and they had different ideological influences, purposes, and strategies of struggle. Communists in Mexico were practically the only organizers in these years to promote both broad working-class unity within the labor movement and powerful alliances between the labor and agrarian movements. Inspired by the Communist International's (Comintern's) global revolutionary strategy, Mexican Communists sought to initiate a nationwide revolutionary movement against the state.

However, Communists found themselves so fractured that they could not adopt or adapt changes to global revolutionary strategy or develop their own unified revolutionary strategy for movements against the state. Their internal challenges included their antagonistic ideological antecedents; lack of organizational and political experience; the absence of economic and intellectual resources; changing personal, political, ideological, and international alignments and conflicts; and damaging state connections and influences. The ways that Communists deployed global changes to strategy in Mexico helped determine how and why the most independent parts of the labor and agrarian movements in Mexico organized and began to unite.

Entangled dialectical relationships developed between Communism and critical parts of people's movements after the Mexican Revolution that are important for understanding the rise of their respective organizations of struggle.

The chapter begins with an overview of Mexican Communists' divisions and challenges, as well as the Communist International's ideological and strategic changes that they attempted to apply in Mexico. These national and international factors set the limits of revolutionary struggle in early post-revolutionary Mexico. It then examines the ways these changes influenced the independent part of the labor movement, best represented by the railroad unions, and the agrarian movement, notably represented by the agrarian leagues, in Veracruz and nationally. The national organizations that grew out of this organizing in the early half of the 1920s allowed for unusual alignments and relationships within and between parts of their respective movements later in the decade.

The Genesis of Mexican Communism

The Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, the PCM) grew out of divisions between anarchists, socialists, and other radicals from Mexico and abroad at the end of the Mexican Revolution, as they considered the global implications of World War I and the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia.[1] In spring 1919, and concurrent with the founding of the Comintern, two Mexico City Socialists, Adolfo Santibáñez and Francisco Cervantes López, attempted to revive a small Socialist Party founded earlier in the decade that had included Santibáñez and the German Socialist Paul Zierold. That March, Santibáñez and Cervantes López called for a fall congress to unite Socialists in Mexico.[2] At its National Socialist Congress held in Mexico City, a new Socialist Party was born.[3] Soon after, two delegates, Linn A. E. Gale and José Allen, created two separate Communist Parties, both with the initials PCM, in September and November, respectively.[4]

The founders of the first Communist Parties in Mexico had critical connections to the United States and they published periodicals that were closely intertwined with the development of their parties.[5] Gale was a US "Slacker," a term used at the time to refer to war resisters, and Allen apparently worked as an agent for the US Military Intelligence Division. While in exile in Mexico, Gale published his periodical, *Gale's Magazine*, for an English-reading audience, especially other Slackers in Mexico, and radical groups in the US. Gale and his allies also published a Spanish-language edition, *Nueva Civilización*, which he later converted to *El Comunista de México*. As the leader of the new Socialist Party, Allen and his associates began publishing a newspaper, *El Soviet*, and transformed the group into the second Communist Party, in November. In December, this second Communist Party replaced its publication of *El Soviet* with

another newspaper, *El Comunista*, edited by Elena Torres, a socialist and feminist educator from Yucatán, before adopting *El Machete* as its newspaper later in the decade. The Communist Party founded by Allen and his group outlasted the Communist Party founded by Gale.

International agents and organizers were indispensable in the creation of the PCM led by Allen and securing its affiliation to the Comintern.[6] These agents included the Russian Soviet emissary in Mexico, Mikhail Borodin; the South Asian anti-colonial revolutionary M. N. Roy; and another Slacker, Charles Phillips. The Comintern considered the Communist Parties to be national sections, and the PCM associated with Allen eventually became the Comintern's Mexican section. As Allen and Gale fought for international recognition from the Comintern, they called their organizations Communist Parties, but, in reality, they were just small groups aspiring to become parties. In the spring of 1921, Allen and Gale were both deported to the United States even though Allen was Mexican.[7] When Allen returned to Mexico, he had lost favor in the PCM (which had been refounded in December 1921), and never again served as its leader.[8] Gale did not return to Mexico and his PCM declined. Santibáñez and Cervantes López also lost relevance and played minimal roles in relation to the remaining PCM. This PCM grew from only a few members in 1919 to a few hundred for most of the 1920s and to 3,000 by the spring of 1929.

Constant arrivals and departures of International Communist agents and organizers contributed to the many personal, political, and ideological influences on the PCM founded by Allen (the only PCM referred to hereafter).[9] These international organizers often traveled through the United States or in arrangement with the US Communist Party. Borodin and Roy never returned to Mexico, but after representing the PCM at the Comintern's Second World Congress in 1920, Phillips returned to Mexico and helped the PCM and local anarchists found the Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT) in 1921. The Mexican government deported Phillips that spring, though he was able to return briefly in the summer and again in 1924–25. During this period, other International Communists in Mexico played critical roles in the PCM's early development. They included Japanese Comintern organizer Sen Katayama, who took refuge in the family home of a young Communist José C. Valadés in 1921. More important in the mid-1920s were Jewish American Communist Bertram D. Wolfe in 1923–25 and Polish-born Soviet Ambassador and Comintern representative in Mexico in 1924–26, Stanislav Pestkovsky, alias "Andrei Vol'skii." The single most important International Communist in Mexico throughout the 1920s was Pestkovsky's main opponent, Swiss-born Comintern representative to

Mexico in those years, Edgar Woog, alias "Alfred Stirner." Woog's comrades in Mexico referred to him informally as "*Güero,*" which meant a white, light-skinned, or blond person. Woog and Valadés founded the PCM-associated Federación de Jóvenes Comunistas de México (Communist Youth Federation of Mexico, FJCM) in 1920. International agents and organizers generated continual internal conflicts within Mexico's Communist Party and its associated organizations. For example, Woog supported Manuel Díaz Ramírez, the PCM's national secretary for most of 1921–24, and continued to do so after Wolfe and Pestkovsky supported Díaz Ramírez's successor, Rafael Carrillo, in 1924–29. Overall, the Comintern's changing relations with and increasing influence over the PCM significantly affected the PCM's strength, unity, and relations to the state and with people's movements.

The Comintern's initial neglect of Mexico and other Latin American countries and, consequently, its neglect of its Communist Parties in its plans for world revolution proved damaging for Mexico's early Communist Party. Without sufficient international guidance or resources, revolutionary responsibility devolved onto unprepared and often unreliable local cadres. In the early 1920s, the Comintern provided only minimal economic resources, relied on indirect relations through the US Communist Party and Communists in or from the US, and sent ephemeral and often failed missions of Comintern agents into Mexico, which contributed to the PCM's deterioration and decay. While the fortunes of the PCM's national secretaries Allen, Díaz Ramírez, and Carrillo depended significantly on international support and recognition through Comintern representatives in Mexico, the Comintern initially did not and could not fully control the PCM, determine its activities, or guarantee its compliance on critical political issues, such as its relations with the state. The Comintern's first attempts to move the PCM away from abstaining in elections failed and initiated years of oscillations between pro-and anti-government propaganda and rhetoric.

The PCM rejected electoral politics at its refoundation in 1921, and, in 1923, it opposed the Comintern's recommendation to participate in the following year's elections in conditional support of Plutarco Elías Calles for president.[10] After much disorder and division, the PCM eventually supported the Álvaro Obregón government against the de la Huerta Rebellion of 1923–24, as well as the Calles campaign in 1924.[11] The establishment of Mexican-Soviet international relations that year, along with changes in the Comintern's global revolutionary strategy, increased the Comintern's interest in Mexico. Thereafter, it sought more direct control over its derelict and defective national section, the PCM.[12] This international interest contributed to internal conflicts that damaged the PCM and its relations with labor and agrarian organizations led by its members. At the same

time, the Comintern's increasing international interest helped align the PCM with the Comintern's global revolutionary strategy, which greatly influenced the relations of the PCM with the Mexican state and with the independent parts of the labor and agrarian movements that were led by Communists. Eventually, this led to independent revolutionary activity against the state, which had ruinous consequences for the parts of people's movements that the state associated with revolutionary antagonism.

Division and Discord

In its earliest years, the PCM was in a state of constant disintegration.[13] The PCM and its leadership were based in Mexico City, but it established important locals in the state of Veracruz, including in its capital, Xalapa. Much of the PCM's early discord resulted from conflicts between its leaders and members in Mexico City and those in Veracruz, who argued over seemingly trivial matters, like who owned, had access to, or stole a typewriter, printing press, or paper. They also engaged in innumerable personal disputes, which they detailed in letters to their International Communist representative, Woog.[14] For example, according to José C. Valadés, José Allen antagonized other leaders and members, and he became particularly self-destructive and abusive toward them after drinking *pulque*, a fermented maguey beverage.[15] Allen also continually antagonized his successor, Manuel Díaz Ramírez, by perpetuating earlier disputes and generating additional problems.[16] Allen's compromising connections to international espionage and his divided allegiances seem to have deepened these conflicts, which were symptomatic of larger economic and organizational problems including those stemming from the Comintern's initial neglect. These problems included lack of funds to carry out operations or acquire resources to print and distribute books, pamphlets, and other texts; inexperience or inability to maintain a functioning organization, like getting members to attend meetings, keep their membership cards, and pay dues; and an absence of theoretical resources or materials for study or education. The Communists' destitution prevented them from developing a strategy for revolution.

In the early years after the Mexican Revolution, Communists in Mexico organized in the absence of Marxist traditions, intellectuals, or texts and instead drew on intellectual, ideological, and political influences from the Mexican state and its allies, as well as anti-state rivals like the anarchists.[17] They began to publish writings by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir I. Lenin, and their own interpretations in several newspapers.[18] However, through the 1920s, Mexican

Communists did not have the economic resources to consistently obtain or produce their desired theoretical or ideological resources or to study Marxism. They could not even get reliable Spanish translations of Marx and Engels's *The Communist Manifesto* or Marx's *Capital* for study.[19] In 1925, in Mexico City, Rafael Carrillo complained that rival Communist leaders in Xalapa had stolen the only copy of Marx's *Capital* he had been able to order from Buenos Aires.[20] The PCM's severe problems made it vulnerable to state subordination and unable to develop itself as independent revolutionary force. Many of Mexico's first Communists were originally anarchists, libertarians, and other kinds of radicals, and often called themselves "anarcho-communists." However, their anti-political antecedents did not prevent them from forming compromising economic and political relationships with Mexican state leaders or engaging in debilitating infighting.

Manuel Díaz Ramírez, the PCM's first major leader after its refoundation at the end of 1921, exemplified these problems.[21] Díaz Ramírez, a tobacco worker originally from Veracruz, had been a member of the Magonista Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party, PLM) and the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) while in the United States. After returning to Veracruz, he came into contact with anarchists involved in union organizing, like the one-eyed tailor Herón Proal, who had participated in early attempts to create a national labor movement in Mexico in the mid-1910s; port union leader Rafael García; and Spanish anarchist José Fernández Oca. Díaz Ramírez got these and other anarchist unionists to attend a night school for workers and, in March 1919, a study and activist group called Evolución Social (Social Evolution), which supported a mixture of ideas involving anarchism, the IWW, and the Russian Revolution. In December 1919, Díaz Ramírez and his group reorganized themselves as Antorcha Libertaria (Libertarian Torch) and published a newspaper, *Irredento*. After relocating to Mexico City in 1920, Díaz Ramírez directed a similar group, Vida Nueva (New Life), and its newspaper of the same name, *Vida Nueva*. That year, he briefly returned to Veracruz and created the PCM Local of Veracruz City with some members of Antorcha Libertaria, including Úrsulo Galván and Manuel Almanza, who eventually settled in Xalapa.

As leader of the PCM from 1921 to 1924, Díaz Ramírez formed relationships with many Mexican state leaders in order to participate in Mexico City and national Mexican politics. He constantly communicated his activities to Woog, perhaps to signal alignment with Comintern strategy. Díaz Ramírez's contacts included Veracruz Governor Adalberto Tejeda and his successor Heriberto Jara, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Ramón P. de Negri and Miguel Mendoza López Schwertfeger in the Secretariat of Agriculture, and Secretary of Education José

Vasconcelos.[22] These relationships sometimes resulted in employment, train passes, loans, and means of recruitment for PCM members. The promise of employment and protection from Tejeda and Jara, and of greater organizational and political support, encouraged Díaz Ramírez to relocate the PCM's national offices to Veracruz.[23] After the defeat of the de la Huerta Rebellion, the PCM voted to keep its national headquarters in Mexico City and replaced Díaz Ramírez with the younger Carrillo.[24] Díaz Ramírez then settled in Xalapa with his partner María del Refugio "Cuca" García, a feminist and former school inspector, from Michoacán.[25]

Once Díaz Ramírez and García were in Xalapa, Carrillo, with the support of Bertram D. Wolfe, began a campaign against them, as well as against Galván and Almanza, the PCM's national agrarian leaders.[26] In May 1924, the PCM leadership blamed Díaz Ramírez for the PCM's many problems and began proceedings for his expulsion.[27] This internal fight transformed into a conflict between the national PCM leadership in Mexico City and PCM's organization in Xalapa and rapidly took on local, national, and international dimensions.[28] In 1924–26, Pestkovsky and Wolfe allied with Carrillo and the PCM's other national leaders against the PCM members in Xalapa: Díaz Ramírez, García, Galván, Almanza, and their ally, Woog.[29] As the conflict intensified in the summer of 1925, the PCM national leadership accused Díaz Ramírez of provoking the indiscipline and division of PCM membership in Xalapa, including Galván and Almanza, and renewed its demand for his expulsion from the PCM.[30] Díaz Ramírez's opponents also accused him and García of opportunism and of being agents of Francisco J. Múgica, the former governor of Michoacán with whom García had previously worked closely.[31]

As Díaz Ramírez and García's personal relationship grew stronger, their attempts to close ranks with their comrades in Xalapa fell apart, and the conflict generated nearly murderous discord among the PCM members in Veracruz. Governor Heriberto Jara turned against Galván and his allies, and Galván nearly killed Díaz Ramírez over accusations revealed in stolen documents.[32] This conflict confirmed García's criticism of Galván and Almanza as unreliable political operators.[33] Continuing in 1926, this struggle contributed to the PCM's unraveling, worsened its international relationships, and did nothing to end some of its members' and leaders' compromising relations with state leaders.[34] It also reduced the PCM's power over parts of people's movements that its members led, in this case, the agrarian leagues in Veracruz and at the national level.

Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Orozco, Xavier Guerrero, and other muralists engaged in their own conflicts and brought compromising

political connections to the Communist Party of Mexico.[35] Rivera, Siqueiros, and Guerrero became PCM members and leaders, and their activities often influenced the PCM's development in very personal and idiosyncratic ways. Rivera received his first major commission from José Vasconcelos, Secretary of Education in Obregón's government, to paint murals for the Mexican state in early 1922. Rivera joined the PCM at the end of 1922, and the muralists and other artists created the Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores (Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors, or the "Painters' Union").[36] In 1924, the Painters' Union launched a newspaper, *El Machete*, which became the PCM's official publication the following year.[37] Although the muralists provided the PCM with a valuable means of expression, their artistic commissions from Vasconcelos allowed them to build on state connections that could potentially compromise, or at least complicate, the PCM's political goals. The PCM elected Rivera as its political secretary at its second congress in 1923, but the leadership soon came to regret that decision.[38] Rivera retained his state connections after successive conflicts between the muralists, the state, students, and the media destroyed the Painters' Union, and after Vasconcelos's departure in 1924.[39] In his personal correspondence with Woog, Díaz Ramírez expressed exasperation with the muralists because, he felt, "they still have too many petit-bourgeois prejudices and others are just too lazy, a species of bohemian-artistic-revolutionary-dilettante-communists, that's all."[40]

According to Díaz Ramírez, Rivera and his comrades preferred to attend meetings with the revolutionary feminist Doña Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza for the Council of the Caxcanes, which claimed to be the successor of a pre-conquest Order of the Quetzal.[41] Rivera was also a member of the Quetzalcóatl Rosicrucian Fraternity, along with state leaders.[42] In these years, Rivera's interests in numerous cultural practices and rituals, including esoteric and spiritual ones, added multiple dimensions to his contradictory artistic, personal, and political commitments and powered his prodigious aesthetic production.

Throughout his life as a revolutionary artist, Rivera prioritized art over revolution. In the first years after the Mexican Revolution, his choices seem to have been more damaging than empowering for Mexico's early Communist Party. Rivera and other Communist muralists nonetheless became important to the transmission and representation of changes in global revolutionary strategy in and for Mexico. Though these muralists were leaders of labor and agrarian organizations and were inspired by these revolutionary strategic changes, they also contributed to the collapse of the parts of movements that they represented.

The United Front and Global Revolutionary Strategy

The Comintern, founded in Moscow in March 1919, grew out of Russia's October Revolution of 1917 and the attempts by revolutionaries in Russia, Europe, and elsewhere to initiate successive socialist revolutions throughout the world.[43] Throughout its existence from 1919 to 1943, the Comintern made several strategic changes based on its changing assessments of the stability of capitalism and the possibility of world revolution.

Anticipating possible revolution in the near future, the Comintern initially supported a global revolutionary offensive. After considering the lower likelihood of revolution after the German November Revolution of 1918–19, revolutionary defeats throughout Europe in 1919–21, and a stabilization of capitalism after World War I, the Comintern adopted and the more defensive United Front of Workers from 1921 to 1928. After returning to a revolutionary offensive in 1928–35, the Comintern adopted the Popular Front Against Fascism and War from 1935 to 1939. The Comintern changed its strategy again, then dissolved in 1943 during World War II.

Changes within the Soviet Union strongly influenced the Comintern's strategic changes.[44] The years of the Russian Civil War and War Communism in 1918–21 coincided with the Comintern's early revolutionary offensive. The Soviet New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921–28, the foundation of the USSR in 1922, and the years of the Soviet strategy of Socialism in One Country after 1924 coincided with the Comintern's United Front. The Soviet transition to the Socialist Offensive, which coincided with the Cultural Revolution, and the deployment of the first Soviet Five-Year Plan in 1928–32 paralleled the Comintern's transition to a Global Socialist Offensive.

Struggles for power over the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Union in these years also directly influenced the Comintern and its strategy. After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin defeated several political oppositions and alliances against him, including Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition and Grigory Zinoviev's United Opposition in 1927 and Nicolai Bukharin's Right Opposition in 1929. Stalin's defeat of the Comintern's early leaders, Zinoviev and Bukharin, moved the Comintern's global revolutionary strategy to the left in 1927–29.

The Comintern's United Front, in effect for most of the 1920s, was intended to unite as many workers as possible under Communist leadership for a long-term revolutionary struggle against capitalism.[45] Building the United Front meant that Communists would organize within existing unions, defeat reformist union leaders, transform trade unions into industrial unions, and lead the

worker organizations in united revolutionary action. The United Front promoted defensive struggles by workers against a global capitalist offensive after the First World War. It involved long-term preparation for revolution rather than actions to immediately initiate revolution. This preparation sometimes meant temporary alliances and cooperation with opponents, unaffiliated parts of the labor movement, and reformist state leaders. The Comintern changed the meaning of the United Front several times, at first allowing alliances and cooperation "from above," for example with rival labor leaders, but eventually supporting only alliances and cooperation "from below."

Overall, the United Front encouraged broad working-class and labor movement unity, as well as the organization of and alliances with agrarian movements. In the United Front years, the Comintern developed the slogan "Workers' and Peasants' Government" to organize workers against capitalists and their states and began to define a strategy for agrarian movements.[46] The Comintern's promotion of the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance derived substantially from Lenin's Revolutionary Alliance of the Working Class and Peasantry as it appeared in writings, speeches, and other statements before, during, and after the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.[47]

During the 1920s, the Comintern also began the process of Bolshevization, which was intended to strengthen revolutionary Leninist organizations and align them with the ruling Bolshevik Party in the Soviet Union, so that the Communist Parties could rise to power in revolution and expand Communism throughout the world.[48] Bolshevization supported the proletarianization of all Communist Parties, which meant promoting working-class cadres to leadership roles and elevating working-class members to political dominance. The United Front emphasized unity within Communist Parties and labor movements but caused divisions within both. Because the parties began to immediately initiate revolutions, the United Front caused discontent among its members and possible allies. Members of Communist Parties who favored initiating revolutions in the near future opposed the change as a delay of revolutionary potentials. Rivals of Communists in the labor movement also refused the invitation of unity on Communist terms.

During its first years of extreme disorganization and disintegration in 1919–21, the PCM attempted to follow the Comintern's original revolutionary offensive. Transitioning to the United Front in 1921 would have meant that the PCM would organize within the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM), founded in 1918, as well as the CGT and other independent labor organizations in order to unite them

in an all-inclusive national labor movement. However, at its refoundation in December 1921, the PCM did not fully accept the Comintern's United Front. The PCM adopted the slogan "Long Live the Revolutionary Unification of the Proletariat!" and a resolution for "the formation of the United Front of the Working Class," but its decisions did not correspond to these slogans. The PCM criticized the CROM but made no plans to organize within it, admitted its defeat by anarchists for control of the CGT, and pledged to organize almost only within autonomous unions outside of the CROM and CGT, above all, within the railroad unions.[49] The PCM's recognition of extreme divisions within the labor movement and its almost exclusive focus on the independent part of the labor movement were practically admissions that working-class unity within a United Front would be nearly impossible in the early 1920s.

The PCM did not initially elaborate on the implications of the United Front for the agrarian movement, but it did make early resolutions on agrarian organizing. These resolutions opposed the Mexican state's agrarian reform and favored direct land seizures. In its first real statement on rural and agrarian issues, the PCM announced it would organize "rural unions of resistance" and form "councils of proletarians in the countryside, preparing them for future soviets."[50] After its initial incomplete acceptance of the United Front, the PCM increasingly aligned with it. This alignment helped the PCM organize and gain leadership of independent, nationally strategic parts of the labor and agrarian movements by 1926.

Industrial Workers and Independent Railroad Unions

Following their first declarations on the United Front in 1921, Communists organized among industrial workers in the independent part of the labor movement, outside of the CROM and CGT, and most successfully among railroad workers and their unions. US railroad workers working in Mexico organized branches of US railroad brotherhoods in Mexico in the late nineteenth century. The first powerful unions of Mexican railroad workers organized strategic workers in shops, on trains, and in offices in the early twentieth century, against the US brotherhoods.[51] These included the Unión de Mecánicos Mexicana (Union of Mexican Machinists, UMM), founded in Puebla in 1900, and the Unión de Conductores, Maquinstas, Garroteros y Fogoneros (Union of Conductors, Locomotive Engineers, Brakemen, and Firemen, UCMGF), founded in Monterrey in 1911.[52] In some cases, Mexican members of the US railroad brotherhoods broke away and formed their own unions like the Alianza de Ferrocarrileros

Mexicanos (Alliance of Mexican Railroad Workers, AFM), first for many trades, and eventually only for office workers, in 1907.[53] Each of these national trade unions in the railroad industry formed local branches of their unions, or "locals," throughout the nation.

In 1908, the government of Porfirio Díaz combined the main railroad companies into the Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México (National Railways of Mexico, FNM), in which it held majority ownership but allowed private management.[54] The railroad unions then began to unite, aided by the Mexicanization of the railroad industry, which involved replacing American workers with Mexican workers.[55] Before, during, and after the Mexican Revolution, railroad workers divided by region, rank, pay, occupation, and affiliation. Their unions disintegrated further during the Revolution, as revolutionary armies recruited railroad workers in their wars against each other.[56] After the Revolution, with the support of Provisional President Adolfo de la Huerta, most of the approximately twenty railroad trade unions united in a single confederation, the Confederación de Sociedades Ferrocarrileras de la República Mexicana (Confederation of Railroad Worker Societies of the Mexican Republic, CSFRM), in January 1921.[57] The CSFRM began with thirteen railroad unions. By 1926, the CSFRM added five more, to include eighteen unions total, with approximately 25,000 members, or 58% of the 42,576 workers employed by the FNM that year.[58] When it was founded, the CSFRM was the most powerful independent labor organization and it was the single greatest threat to the CROM's dominance over the national labor movement.

Despite the creation of the CSFRM, the railroad unions remained divided. Some, like the strategic UCMGF of conductors, remained independent. The CSFRM's organizational structure also allowed the individual trade unions much autonomy at the expense of greater unity. During a major strike in 1921, the CSFRM forced recognition from the FNM and then president Álvaro Obregón.[59] However, partly because of the railroad unions' earlier ties to de la Huerta, Obregón and Calles accused them of supporting the de la Huerta Rebellion in 1923–24. The CROM also sought to take over the railroad unions.[60] The CSFRM unions remained highly independent of the Mexican state and the CROM, but their conservative leaders remained on the defensive and were willing to negotiate to avoid dangerous conflicts with the FNM, the state, and the CROM.

In this context, President Plutarco Elías Calles sought to increase state control over the railroad unions. As part of negotiations to repay Mexico's international debt to the United States, the FNM was to privatize at the beginning of 1926.[61] In preparation for the economic restructuring and privatization of the FNM, and to reduce the possibility of resistance on the part of the CSFRM

and its railroad unions, Calles placed the FNM under jurisdiction of the Secretariat of Communications and Public Works (SCOP) in February 1925.[62] This shift formally defined FNM workers as public employees and restricted their rights to unionize, negotiate, and strike. The SCOP defined these restrictions in a detailed *Reglamento*, or regulation book, for the FNM and its workers in July 1925.[63] In response, partial railroad strikes broke out.[64]

The railroad unions consequently strengthened their national organization and reorganized the CSFRM into the Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (Confederation of Transport and Communication Workers, CTC) at the Tercer Congreso Ferrocarrilero (Third Railroad Worker Congress) in November–December 1926.[65] Compared to the CSFRM, the CTC was a more industrially powerful confederation, and it was an even greater threat to the CROM, but it was not a national industrial union, and the national trade unions within it retained their sovereignty. At the national level, the railroad unions elected a Communist, Elías Barrios, to serve as the CTC's first secretary general, but most of the unions remained under conservative leaders. The UMM, the most strategic union in the machine shops, called its own strike against the FNM at the end of 1926, without consultation with the broader union confederation.[66]

Communist power among the railroad unions grew out of the PCM's attempts to organize industrial workers in independent unions in the early 1920s. Communist labor organizing according to the United Front was also a critical origin of the CTC strike of 1927, as well as a major contribution to industrial unionism in Mexico. As the PCM began to accept and apply the United Front, its connections with railroad workers and unions remained modest but began to grow starting with the railroad carpenters' union.[67] Bertram D. Wolfe conducted Marxist educational programs for carpenters and other railroad workers in Mexico City, some of whom were recruited to the PCM.[68] The PCM's attempts to organize railroad and other industrial workers began to provide some lasting results when a few PCM members who were also members of a Mexico City local of Alianza, the office workers's union in the CSFRM, began to meet in 1924.[69] Through the *El Machete* column "Del Riel" (From the Rail), this group consistently encouraged the CSFRM to unite in response to attacks from the FNM, the Mexican state, and the CROM. Using *El Machete* to organize, politicize, and recruit railroad workers to the PCM, this group of Communist office workers helped the PCM create its version of the United Front in 1924–26.

The group of Communist railroad office workers began with José López, "La Gallina" (Hen), who distributed *El Machete* in the offices. Enrique Torres, "El Pollo" (Chicken), and Carlos Rendón, "Cinco Patas" (Five Paws), soon joined

López. López, Torres, and Rendón recruited the president of the General Security Council of the Alianza, Elías Barrios, who provided office space for meetings. They then recruited a typist in the railroad general superintendent office in Mexico City, Hernán Laborde.[70] Laborde was originally from Veracruz and was an accomplished poet, with connections to other poets in Latin America and Spain.[71] In December 1923, Laborde joined the Alianza and became the president of one of its five locals in Mexico City, Local 27. He used his literary skills and political concepts, likely derived from membership in the PCM, to attack the FNM and union leaders whom he considered complicit in its imminent privatization.[72]

Immediately after the FNM's privatization in January 1926, the company's managers, offended by what it considered his "intemperance of language" and "acerbic critique," used the SCOP Reglamento of 1925 to fire Laborde as a disciplinary measure for "disloyalty to the company."[73] After Laborde joined the meetings of Communist office workers, more Alianza union members joined, including Jorge Díaz Ortiz, Francisco Berlanga, and José María Benítez, editor of the union's newspaper, *Alianza*. Scandalized by an article the group published in *Alianza*, the union's president, Carlos Corral, resigned and blamed the PCM, calling it an *escuadrón de hierro* (iron squadron).[74] Corral's attempt to mock the group backfired because it instead baptized the group with a militant-sounding name and a battle cry, "*¡El Escuadrón de Hierro!*"

At the end of 1925, around the time of Laborde's critique of the FNM, the members of the informal Escuadrón de Hierro created a more formal organization, the Comité Pro-Unificación Obrera (Pro-Labor Unification Committee, CPUO), and launched a newspaper, *Unificación*, with the support of the PCM and inspired by the United Front.[75] After the FNM fired Laborde in January 1926, he became secretary general of the CPUO and edited *Unificación*. In its pages, CPUO members like Barrios, Laborde, and the original members of the Escuadrón made several appeals to the railroad unions and to the broader labor movement. They also developed their own ways of applying the United Front to Mexico.[76] The CPUO designed its overtures to achieve "class solidarity" and the "unification" of all workers in Mexico.[77]

The CPUO's conception of the United Front reinforced the PCM's earlier focus on the railroad unions, but more explicitly and concretely envisioned a railroad union–led alliance with other independent unions. They sought alliances with groups such as the electrical and oil unions as the strategic requirement for broader working-class unity in Mexico.[78] While continuing to oppose the CROM and CGT leaderships, the CPUO was optimistic about the possibility

of winning over their members to the idea of creating of a single United Front organization that would encompass all unions and represent the Mexican working class as a whole. The CPUO called on workers to energetically engage in "the class struggle" through the use of a revolutionary, "expropriating general strike," which it considered tantamount to a "social revolution" against the Mexican state and "the capitalist regime."[79] Strikes were to serve as a means of transforming the CPUO into one United Front organization designed with the purpose of "resisting the capitalist offensive" in Mexico.

Through its writings in *Unificación* in 1926, the CPUO stated that the CSFRM was "currently on the verge of a serious conflict" that could serve as a starting point in strengthening the movement toward a United Front organization open to all workers and unions in the country.[80] The CPUO called for a more powerfully organized CSFRM and requested solidarity from "all worker and peasant groups throughout the Republic" for a CSFRM general railroad strike to take place later in the year.[81]

The CPUO's ideas of 1925–26 did not substantially depart from the PCM's earlier ideas about organizing and uniting the working class and the labor movement according to the United Front. Given the extreme divisions among the railroad unions and within the labor movement as a whole in the 1920s, the CPUO's appeals to unite the entire labor movement and ally it with the agrarian movement seemed overly ambitious and unlikely to succeed. However, Communist appeals inspired by the United Front had a few important effects. These appeals and actions set the standard for unity that guided and influenced the limited attempts at labor unification during the remainder of the 1920s and the more extensive and successful attempts of the 1930s. They also allowed the Communists to help the railroad unions create a more unified structure and to gain leadership of the reorganized railroad union confederation, the CTC, in 1926. These results were significant for the CTC railroad strike of 1927 and its many consequences, including the subsequent downfall of many unions and years of failed attempts at alliances with agrarian leagues.

Rural Communities and Agrarian Leagues in Veracruz and the Nation

Despite their original neglect of the agrarian movement, Communists were most successful in organizing rural communities in agrarian leagues, first at the state and then the national level. The most important place for Communist agrarian organizing was Veracruz, under the leadership of Úrsulo Galván and Manuel

Almanza. Although Communist-led leagues existed in other states, such as in Michoacán under Primo Tapia, Veracruz organizers were instrumental in creating a national league in 1926. This national agrarian league immediately replaced the Partido Nacional Agrarista (National Agrarian Party, PNA), founded in 1920, as the dominant organization in the national agrarian movement. Strategically located between Mexico City and the Gulf Coast, Veracruz's success was linked to its rich and diverse economic setting and potential, its population and agriculture, and its experience with agrarian reform.[82] In 1930, Veracruz was the seventh largest territory in Mexico, yet the most populous with 1.37 million inhabitants including the largest rural population of 1.05 million inhabitants.[83] That year, Veracruz also had the largest agricultural workforce (326,000) and the largest landless population (237,600), including tenants, sharecroppers, and agricultural laborers who did not own agricultural land, of any Mexican state.[84] Veracruz also had the highest amount of agricultural land of any state and the highest combined value of agricultural properties, including private properties.[85]

The large rural, agricultural, and landless populations offered great potential for agrarian organizing and reform, as did its agricultural potential, valuable land, and unequal concentration of private lands in large properties. Veracruz was famous for its agrarian reform in the 1920s, especially during Adalberto Tejeda's two gubernatorial administrations, 1920–24 and 1928–32.[86] However, the reform in Veracruz was modest in terms of the distribution of ejidos compared to the reform elsewhere. Larger and more valuable privately owned agricultural properties also continued to exist in Veracruz. By 1930, Veracruz was third after the states of Puebla and Mexico in actual number of ejidos constituted (387), but it was only tenth in ejido area and seventh in total ejido land value.[87] The proportion of land in Veracruz constituted as ejidos versus land that remained under private ownership was even lower than the low national average, covering only 0.6% of total agricultural properties in Veracruz, 4.7% of its agricultural area, and 7.1% of the value of all agricultural properties in the nation.[88]

Veracruz was nonetheless important in the genesis of national agrarian reform and its communities were early beneficiaries of ejidos. In October 1914, Veracruz Governor Cándido Aguilar, Venustiano Carranza's nephew, released one of the nation's first major agrarian laws, and Carranza himself released his own January 1915 Agrarian Law from Veracruz.[89] La Antigua, north of the city, was one of the first to petition for and receive a provisional ejido through Aguilar, and one of the few to obtain a definitive restitution through Carranza.[90] After Carranza integrated the 1915 Law into Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, other communities began to obtain ejidos definitively through presidential

resolutions, usually in the form of dotation. Soledad de Doblado, west of Veracruz City, was one of the first communities in Veracruz to receive a presidential resolution for an ejido, as dotation, in February 1918.[91] The Carrancista agrarian reform in Veracruz under Aguilar created a precedent for the next governor, Tejeda, to increase the distribution of provisional ejidos to communities during his first term, coinciding with the presidency of Obregón in 1920–24.

One community that petitioned for and received both provisional and definitive ejidos during this period was Salmoral, in La Antigua municipality. Salmoral made its first petition for an ejido in December 1921. It won its provisional ejido approved by Tejeda in April 1922, had its definitive ejido approved by Obregón in October 1923, and constituted the ejido in June 1924.[92] The communities of La Antigua, Salmoral, and Soledad, with their proven ability to obtain ejidos, provided examples for other communities and established a community-level basis for the rise of the Veracruz agrarian league during Tejeda's governorship and under his patronage. The context for agrarian organizing at this time was relatively open. Organizers enjoyed the support of Governor Tejeda and did not receive significant opposition from rival labor or agrarian organizations like the PNA. In this setting, PCM members succeeded at organizing many communities into a powerful and lasting agrarian league in 1923.

As veterans of anarchist labor organizing and based on their experiences with Díaz Ramírez's radical organizing in Veracruz, Galván and Almanza joined the PCM's Local of Veracruz. Their first test of fire outside of the labor movement was the urban rent strike movement of 1922, which grew out of protests by female sex workers in Veracruz. That February, Galván and Almanza helped organize the Sindicato Revolucionario de Inquilinos (Revolutionary Union of Tenants, SRI).[93] In March, their ally Herón Proal led the SRI in a mass strike, joined by 40,000 tenants. Almanza began publishing the PCM Local of Veracruz's newspaper, *El Frente Único*, named after the United Front, in June, which supported the SRI's rent strike movement.[94] The rent strike continued into the summer of 1922, but turned bloody as the PCM Local of Veracruz and the SRI divided into pro-and anti-Proal factions. Conflicts between and among strikers and their opponents increased and led to military forces being brought in and massacring the mostly female strikers in July.[95] Despite the violence of the strike and its repression, the jailing of Proal, and the tenant strike movement's division and decline, the PCM Local of Veracruz survived and Almanza continued to print *El Frente Único*. Galván and Almanza used their experiences and connections from the failed rent strike movement and through their leadership of the Communist Party in Veracruz to begin a more successful rural and agrarian organizing campaign.

With the support of the PCM Local of Veracruz and the SRI, Galván began visiting communities near the city of Veracruz like Soledad de Doblado and organizing agrarian committees elsewhere in the state of Veracruz to obtain ejidos as Soledad had.[96] On February 3, 1923, Galván and Almanza set out for the Veracruz countryside with a team of SRI, PCM, and Communist Youth organizers, including Sóstenes Blanco, Guillermo Cabal, and women who had joined Galván and Almanza on earlier rural organizing tours: Carmen Aguilar, María Luisa Sarmiento, Rosa Toral, and in some accounts, a singer and orator named Aurelia. They started in Salmoral, a community that had successfully petitioned for an ejido, based on connections with a local agrarian leader, José Cardel. From there, the caravan traveled along the parallel Interoceanic and Mexican Railway lines from east to west and won support for an agrarian league from many communities. After the tour, Tejeda invited Galván to the governor's palace in Xalapa and offered to sponsor the founding congress of the Veracruz agrarian league.[97] Tejeda considered this league a potentially powerful and organized social and political constituency to rival his economic and political opponents, and his support ensured the success of the agrarian league.

The congress attracted 128 delegates representing 100 agrarian committees in eleven of eighteen of the Veracruz's former cantons and a minority of CROM and CGT unions that had begun some of the early agrarian organizing in Veracruz. On March 23, the delegates created the Liga de Comunidades Agrarias del Estado de Veracruz (League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Veracruz, LCAEV), which grew from 20,000 members at its founding to 30,000 by the end of the decade.[98] The delegates elected the LCAEV's first executive committee, which included Galván as president and community leaders he recruited during the tour in February. The LCAEV's foundation in March 1923 made it the largest, most powerful, and best-organized agrarian league in the country. However, its program was moderate and vague. The thirteen articles in its founding statutes abstractly promised to benefit communities with the Mexican state's agrarian reform laws and institutions.[99]

The statutes, however, made no mention of specific forms or sizes of desired land, or of kinds of ejidos, and offered no critique of existing agrarian laws or institutions. The LCAEV was likely vague in order to avoid endangering its alliance with Tejeda, who remained the league's most important and consistent supporter. Tejeda allowed the LCAEV to establish its offices in the capital of Veracruz, Xalapa, provided a subsidy to finance the league's operations, and put the league leaders in contact with Obregón, who also approved the league's creation.[100] The LCAEV in turn helped Obregón and Tejeda defeat the de la Huerta Rebellion of 1923–24.[101]

The national PCM leadership under Díaz Ramírez supported Galván, Almanza, and their efforts to strengthen the LCAEV, despite its Mexican state connections and moderate founding goals. These positions had little in common with the PCM's earlier positions, such as rejecting the state's agrarian reform. At its second congress in April 1923, the PCM elected Galván to serve as its national secretary of agriculture and supported his early plans to create a national agrarian organization.[102] The PCM also facilitated the LCAEV's international relations, and sent Galván, with funds from Tejeda, to attend the Moscow-based and Comintern-allied International Peasant Council (Krestintern) at its founding congress in October 1923.[103]

During these years, the PCM leadership under Carrillo attempted to develop a revolutionary agrarian strategy.[104] In the spring of 1924, following revolutionary land reform in the Soviet Union, the PCM argued for the distribution of large landholdings to communities for collective agriculture as opposed to the Mexican state's distribution of small landholdings as ejidos.[105] By the following spring, however, the PCM tried but could not define a clear national agrarian program. It wavered between condemnation and support of parts of the state's agrarian reform, while calling for the total abolition of large landholdings, private property, and collective communal cultivation of the land.[106] While the PCM admitted that it needed to "face the field," which meant to organize in the countryside, at its third congress in spring 1925, it failed to define its agrarian strategy.[107]

Partly because of their conflict with the PCM's national leadership, Galván and other Communist agrarian leaders in Veracruz continually ignored and rejected most of the PCM's changing, contradictory, and incomplete determinations on agrarian matters, except its call to create a national agrarian organization. Their participation in the Krestintern also encouraged them to create a national Mexican affiliate for the Krestintern.[108] The LCAEV affiliated to the Krestintern in December 1924, and Almanza represented the organization at the Krestintern's second conference in spring 1925.[109] The continued membership of Galván and other Veracruz Communist agrarian leaders in the PCM and their relations with the Krestintern help explain their use of revolutionary rhetoric, including calls for "proletarian revolution" and the "abolition of private property."[110]

However, nothing led Galván or other agrarian leaders to change the LCAEV's moderate founding statutes, significantly alter their original form of organizing, or challenge the rules or institutions of agrarian reform established by the Mexican state.[111] Instead, the LCAEV leaders' participation in the conflict within the PCM likely moved them closer to Tejeda, who had by then joined Calles's cabinet, and further aligned them to his government's

increasingly moderate agrarian reform. The LCAEV's debilitation after the de la Huerta Rebellion, along with its increasingly difficult relations with Heriberto Jara, Tejeda's successor as governor, also forced it to shift to organizing on a national level.[112] Galván, Almanza, and other disaffected Communist agrarian leaders in Veracruz therefore sowed the seeds of national agrarian organizing when they joined with leaders of agrarian leagues in other states to create a moderate and state-allied, but revolutionary-sounding, national league.[113]

A preliminary conference in Mexico City attended by representatives of many leagues and a solidarity pact issued in the summer of 1925 were the official signs of the formation of a national league.[114] Once its relations with the PCM and its organizational position in Veracruz improved, the LCAEV increased its work and commitment to form a national organization at its third congress in April 1926.[115] This allowed the LCAEV to form a more serious national organizing commission, which was led by Galván and Almanza and included representatives of leagues from Morelos and Puebla.[116] Playing a role similar to Galván's community organizing caravan in 1923 but on a national scale, the organizing commission of 1926 successfully strengthened connections between the Veracruz league and leagues throughout the country. On October 1, 1926, agrarian leagues from Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Puebla, and Veracruz announced the long-awaited congress, scheduled for Mexico City on November 15–20, 1926.[117]

This national agrarian unification congress reaped the harvest of many years of organizing. It included 155 total delegates who represented the agrarian league of Veracruz, as well as leagues from the Federal District and fifteen states: Chihuahua, Durango, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico State, Michoacán, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, and Yucatán.[118] On November 16, delegates voted to create the Liga Nacional Campesina (National Peasant League, LNC), which represented 310,000 members at its founding.[119] The Tamaulipas agrarian league, sponsored by Governor Emilio Portes Gil, left the LNC before the end of its founding congress, but the following year, the LNC added leagues in Nayarit and Nuevo León, raising its overall membership to 320,000.[120]

The LNC's foundation made it the most powerful and united national agrarian organization in Mexico to that date. Its size, national scope, varied local and regional representation, multiple agrarian constituencies, mutually supportive national relations with the Mexican state, international relations with the Krestintern, and minimal resistance from rival agrarian and labor organizations all suggested that the LNC could become an important social and political force for agrarian reform. The LNC founders and leaders Galván and Almanza were still members of the PCM and used revolutionary language and symbols, which

also suggested that the LNC might become a revolutionary force. For example, the LNC standard was a red flag inscribed with the words "*Tierra y Libertad*" ("Land and Liberty") and a sickle with the slogan "*Campesinos de América, Uníos!*" ("Peasants of America, Unite!").[121]

Galván and Almanza also incorporated revolutionary-sounding phrases into the LNC statutes, such as aspirations for the eventual "socialization of the land and all other means of production" and "liberation from the capitalist yoke."[122] They sought to further enhance their radical credentials with constant allusions to Emiliano Zapata in the congress sessions, along with a plan to construct a monument for Zapata through the sale of coined images of him.[123] They also claimed that the LNC would be the "genuine representative of the poor peasants of Mexico, whether they are ejido recipients or wage workers in agricultural industries," and pledged to "establish relations of solidarity with organized workers and cooperate with them in all of their struggles."[124] However, Galván and Almanza's earlier condemnations of industrial workers and denunciations of the labor movement in the name of the LCAEV, their maintenance of moderate agrarian statutes for the LCAEV, continued conflicts with the PCM, and increasing alliances with the Calles government suggested that the LNC would remain moderate rather than revolutionary on agrarian matters and would oppose genuine alliances with the labor movement.[125]

Despite its revolutionary language, symbolism, and promises for worker solidarity, the LNC's founding statutes of 1926 were not particularly radical or revolutionary. Instead, the LNC founders accepted and promoted the Calles government's version of agrarian reform and reduced the likelihood that it would become an independent force for any other kind of agrarian reform. The LNC's founding documents did not challenge the Mexican state or its agrarian reform program, nor did it criticize the premises or assumptions upon which the reform rested. The LNC's nominally Communist founders instead relied on the Carrancista Agrarian Decree of January 1915 and Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917 as sovereign laws of the land.[126]

Sounding like the post-revolutionary Mexican state leaders, the LNC founders declared that the "Institution of the Ejido, perfected and completed through diverse forms of cooperative action and common work," was to be the centerpiece of the reform.[127] State leaders increased ejido distribution throughout the 1920s, but the overall distribution was low in absolute and relative terms.[128] The Calles regime distributed more land than all previous regimes combined, but Calles favored small private property and agricultural production over ejido distribution and attempted to end the reform toward the end of his term and

afterward.[129] Following the Calles government's more limited version of reform that emphasized agricultural development and economic productivity rather than land distribution or equity, the LNC founders claimed that their goal for agrarian reform was no longer to distribute new ejidos to communities, but to obtain greater harvests for communities that already had them.[130] Instead of calling for a more extended agrarian reform based on the ejido, or any alternate reform critical of the ejido, the LNC founders silenced any dissent in exchange for state support.

By the end of 1926, Communist labor and agrarian organizing according to the United Front had led to Communist leadership of both the CTC and the LNC, which were the most important national organizations within their respective movements. This gave the PCM unusual power over critical parts of both the labor movement and the agrarian movement. Both of the respective Communist leaders of the CTC and LNC, Barrios and Galván, had adopted language from the United Front, including calls for alliances between labor and agrarian movements. However, the significant differences within and between both movements signaled issues that would be difficult or impossible to overcome. These included the ways the CTC and LNC were organized; different demographic, economic, and class representation and goals; different relations with the rival organizations within the same movement and with organizations of other movements; different relations with the state and its leaders; and different relations with rival factions of the Communist Party. The CTC strike in 1927 and substantial change in global revolutionary strategy in 1927–29 both added tremendous complexity to these relationships, in some ways increasing connections between organizations and in other ways, generating extreme fragmentation and disconnection between them.

CHAPTER 3

The Waves and Currents of Struggle

The great transport and Communication Strike of 1927, led by the Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (Confederation of Transportation and Communication Workers, CTC), was the most widespread, national, and influential class struggle in the early years after the Mexican Revolution. The original goal of the strike was to offer solidarity to one of the CTC's affiliated unions, the Unión de Mecánicos Mexicana (Union of Mexican Machinists, UMM), which struck the Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México (National Railways of Mexico, FNM) in late 1926. Mexican state leaders had privatized the FNM at the beginning of 1926, but still defined workers as public employees in an attempt to constrain their resistance. The FNM's privatization was part of a Mexican state agreement with international bankers to pay back Mexican debt after the Revolution and involved economic restructuring of the FNM to reduce the size of the workforce. The national Mexican economic recession that began in 1926 also led the company to reduce employment and refuse worker demands, while workers fought to keep their jobs and maintain existing salaries amid worsening national economic conditions.

The UMM, which represented machinists in the railroad machine shops, began its strike when the railroad unions were in the process of reorganizing themselves into the CTC. The government of President Plutarco Elías Calles antagonized the railroad unions in the middle of its war with the Catholic Church and the Cristeros. Each of the railroad trade unions retained sovereignty within the broader confederation of the CTC and resisted wider coordination or cooperation with the other railroad unions. The confederation's attempts at reorganization also highlighted divisions between the moderate and conservative leaders of each union, the middle and lower ranks of union members, and among divisional councils. The CTC allied with Communists to elect a member of the Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, PCM), Elías Barrios, to overall leadership of the railroad unions.

The UMM strike began independently of the other railroad unions, including those representing workers in the same shops as the machinists. It forced the newly reorganized CTC and its new Communist leadership to decide on the most appropriate course of action. Every approach, from avoiding to initiating a general solidarity strike against the FNM, carried clear risks and real dangers, including the further division and destruction of the railroad unions and their potential takeover by the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM) and the Mexican state. Ultimately, after weeks of debate, the CTC leadership decided to begin a strike against the FNM, not only to defend the UMM, but also for a variety of other demands, from union recognition and contracts to improved wages, hours, and working conditions. The CTC's strike was also a defense against the state and the CROM, which sent both the military and strikebreakers to defeat the strikers and take over the railroad unions. In the end, neither the CTC nor the FNM won. Nor did the Mexican state or the CROM, both of which supported the FNM against the CTC. Nonetheless, the struggle proved consequential.

The origins and history of the CTC strike of 1927 are mostly unknown and have been shrouded in mystery. The only complete narrative of the event is a memoir by its leader, Elías Barrios.[1] This chapter narrates the struggle and explains how, by making use of their industrially and technically strategic positions at work, railroad workers were able to demonstrate their power to stop and continue national and industrial transport, although it proved insufficient to win their struggle.[2] The force that workers unleashed during their strike, and the force that their antagonists deployed to keep workers on the job and trains running, weakened and divided the railroad unions, ensuring their overall defeat and failure. This outcome diminished not only the CTC's capacity to lead the independent part of the labor movement, but also that of the Communists, as Communists transitioned away from the United Front and sought to ally labor unions with the agrarian leagues over the following years.

The Origins of the Great Transport and Communication Strike

On New Year's Day 1927, when the CTC came into being under the leadership of Barrios, the first item on its agenda was the UMM strike, which had been in effect since December 1926.[3] The earlier version of the CTC, the Confederación de Sociedades Ferrocarrileras de la República Mexicana (Confederation of Railroad Worker Societies of the Mexican Republic, CSFRM), had promised

solidarity with the UMM, but did not strike.[4] For Barrios and the other Communists of the Escuadrón de Hierro, it was up to the CTC to make good on this promise, but they faced resistance from most of the railroad union leaders.[5] These conflicting positions became visible during the first week of January 1927, when the CTC Confederation Council held a meeting at its union hall in Mexico City to decide on how to respond to the UMM strike.[6]

In attendance were many of the leaders of the eighteen national railroad unions of the CTC, and the *Gobiernos Generales* (Governors General), a leadership body within the CSFRM that was supposed to represent railroad workers beyond their specific trades and unions. The conservative leaders of the CSFRM opposed any strike. Workers without votes from the various railroad unions in Mexico City, however, disrupted the meeting, and spoke out in favor of Barrios and a strike. Those workers were mostly rank-and-file UMM members and members of the office workers' union, the Alianza de Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos (Alliance of Mexican Railroad Workers, AFM). Their disruption brought the divisions between railroad union members and leaders into stark relief. The strategic Unión de Conductores, Maquinstas, Garroteros y Fogoneros (Union of Conductors, Locomotive Engineers, Brakemen, and Firemen, UCMGF) remained independent of the CTC and so did not take part in its strike deliberations.

Barrios observed that leaders of only three of seventeen railroad unions in the CTC not yet on strike—those representing carpenters, coppersmiths, and maintenance-of-way workers—were definitely in favor of a solidarity strike for the UMM. The remaining fourteen opposed a strike, including the AFM, to which Barrios and the Escuadrón de Hierro belonged. Of the three leaders of the CTC Executive Committee, only Barrios and Miguel Fernández supported the strike. The rest of the governors general opposed any strike. Therefore, the first meeting of the CTC began to clarify the positions of the various unions if the CTC were to begin a national general strike. Events outside of the railroad union hall rapidly lent further clarity, but not unanimity or unity, to the situation.

On January 13, a railroad worker protest revealed the potential for solidarity as well as violence if a CTC general strike was to occur. That morning, workers with placards, picket signs, and banners occupied the patios, terraces, balconies, and street in front of the CTC's hall on Héroes No. 50, in an area northwest of downtown Mexico City and south of the Buenavista railroad station. The purpose of the protest, to be followed by a march, was to show solidarity for the UMM and demand a favorable resolution to its strike. When the Mexico City government denied a permit for the march, the crowds decided to march anyway, shouting "Long Live the Rebellion!" and "Death to the Turk!" to mock Calles.

The marchers did not get very far because members of the mounted police and railroad company police threatened to stop the protest with force if the workers did not dissolve their rally. The police ended their message with a military salute. The protestors refused to disperse.

From the rooftops and through windows of the railroad confederation building, workers began shouting to the crowds below about the necessity to continue the march. They asked: "Since when do workers ask permission to struggle?" As the workers began to march, sirens approached, followed by fire trucks and the chief of police's vehicle. As these forces encircled the crowds, some of the workers raised improvised barricades to block the entry of the fire trucks, to prevent the departure of protestors, and fortify the railroad building. Firefighters shot streams of water into the faces of marchers, and workers responded by throwing bricks and rocks, causing a fire truck to crash into a streetlight. The police chief then ordered a fleet of twenty officers armed with axes, clubs, and iron truncheons into the crowd. One officer threw his hatchet at the head of a worker, chopping off an ear. As the unequal battle continued between workers and security forces, a police truck arrived from Violeta Street, near the UMM office. Uniformed reinforcements placed themselves in position, pointed their rifles, and released booming warning shots. After these shots, agents hunted the soaked workers who had finally disbanded and became fugitives as the firefighters continued to shower those left behind. Agents apprehended those who could not escape and placed them on buses destined for local police stations.

The protest that began in rage and fury ended in a siege of water and bullets. Besides indicating that a CTC general strike may incite solidarity, violence, or both, Mexican state repression of the protest clarified the very limited support for a strike by most of the railroad union leaders. However, the protest also won strike commitments from the leadership of the local and division councils recently created within the CTC. Ten CTC local and division councils representing railroad workers on lines throughout the country immediately protested the breakup of the demonstration, supported the UMM, and promised a CTC strike against the FNM in letters to President Calles.[7] The backing of the CTC councils increased the power of the CTC leaders and members favoring the strike, but also underscored new divisions within the confederation.

The threat of the CTC councils compelled the CTC Executive Committee to begin preparations for a general solidarity strike against the FNM. Barrios and Fernández hurriedly drew up a series of four demands that they presented to the FNM vice president and general manager Mariano Cabrera on January 15, requesting resolution by January 23.[8]

The first two demands centered on the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (Secretariat of Communications and Public Works, SCOP) 1925 *Reglamento*, or regulation book, for the FNM. This regulation restricted workers' rights to unionize, negotiate, and strike as part of the company's privatization, but the CTC claimed that the company had further violated their rights by disregarding many of the Reglamento's provisions. The third demand was for the opening of negotiations for a single collective contract between the CTC and the FNM, as well as individual contracts with all of the CTC's eighteen trade unions. The letter's fourth demand was substantial but unwieldy. It detailed a pattern of assault by the FNM on the CTC and its eighteen unions by enumerating seventy-eight conflicts that required resolution, mostly specific company violations of the SCOP Reglamento.[9] Finally, the letter demanded a favorable resolution to the UMM strike.

At first, the FNM seemed ready to negotiate when it requested that the CTC send a revised set of demands. So on January 20, the CTC revised its four demands with the seventy-eight sub-points of January 15, 1927, into five demands.[10] The resolution of the UMM strike was the new, fifth demand. To clarify the positions of the different railroad unions and again attempt to unify them in case the company refused to negotiate or rejected their demands, the CTC Executive Committee called a plenary meeting of the CTC leadership to begin on February 1.

Created by the Tercer Congreso Ferrocarrilero (Third Railroad Worker Congress) the previous year, the CTC plenum gave representation to railroad divisional councils, but the individual railroad unions retained much voting power and could in practice overturn or obstruct the plenum's decisions. An innovation established by the Third Railroad Worker Congress to resolve possible disputes within the new CTC, plenum rules provided for a meeting of thirty-four leaders representing the CTC's eighteen trade unions and twenty-three more delegates representing the CTC's division councils, presided over by the three members of the CTC executive council. The CTC plenum favored the representation of the trade unions over the division councils, many of which had proven their intention to strike despite the opposition of the trade union leaderships and even of the executive council if necessary.[11] As in the previous meeting, pro-strike delegates disrupted the proceedings, but this time they seemed to have support from the CTC leadership. The division council representatives quickly formed a commission of seven to draft a general strike declaration and plan of action. On February 5, the seven-person plenary commission presented a strike declaration to the CTC plenum.[12] Of nine points, the most critical was the threat of

a general railroad strike in ten days if the FNM did not resolve the CTC's five demands from its letter of January 20. From then on, these demands framed the struggle between the CTC and the FNM.

The CTC leadership decided that a three-person General Strike Committee would lead the strike. The committee had the power to determine the order in which to strike each division of the national railroad system. It was composed of Fernández, member of the CTC Executive Committee and of the UMM; Alberto López Pineda, former CSFRM secretary general and leader of the dispatchers' and telegraphers' unions; and Cruz C. Contreras of the blacksmiths' union. On the last day of the plenum, thirty-five of the union leaders and division council delegates signed the declaration, a seemingly united sign of support for a CTC general strike. Then on February 7, Barrios and Fernández notified FNM vice president Mariano Cabrera, Executive President Bertram Holloway, and Chief of Personnel Camilo Pani of the CTC's decision to strike.[13] On the same day, the CTC leaders also notified Secretary of Industry Luis N. Morones of their intention to use the right-to-strike clause in Article 123 of the Constitution of 1917, which allowed workers to strike within ten days of the notice if their demands were not satisfied.

Representatives of the FNM and the Mexican state that retained majority ownership of the company disagreed on how to handle the union demands. In representation of the FNM, Pani replied on February 8 that the company would not negotiate over any of the CTC's five demands.[14] He argued that the fifth demand, resolution of the UMM strike, was off-limits since Morones had already declared it illegal.[15] While Barrios and Fernández claimed that their strike was legal according to Article 123, Pani deemed it unconstitutional because it did not follow the timing of notification required by the constitution. Meanwhile, although Clause 18 of Article 123 required notifying a board of conciliation and arbitration, no such federal board existed to handle conflicts of the scope that the CTC posed.

As a member of the Calles government, Morones replied to the CTC on February 14 that the Calles Railroad Law of 1926, in particular Clause 11 of its Article 119, made railroad workers in conflict with their companies "subject exclusively to the Federal Power."[16] Also noting that Article 8 of the Law on Secretariats of State had placed relevant conflicts involving labor under the jurisdiction of the Secretariat of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, Morones claimed that his secretariat had federal powers to arbitrate the conflict, just as it had in the UMM strike.[17] Morones then opened negotiations on the first four demands of the CTC strike notice, but not the fifth, since he claimed his prior

ruling resolved the UMM strike. During a meeting with Morones and company representatives on February 16, Barrios refused to sign an agreement that did not include resolution of the UMM strike.[18] Barrios's intransigence and Pani's influence moved Morones to promise an illegal ruling against the CTC strike if it began in solidarity with the UMM.[19] Disregarding state mediation, the CTC continued its strike preparations.

The FNM then courted the CTC's union leaders who had previously opposed any partial strike because it would disrupt general strike preparations. Pani queried the unions on whether they really supported the strike declaration that they had signed on February 5 and the notification of intention to strike, delivered to company and government representatives on February 7. Between February 9 and 16, fifteen of the eighteen trade unions in the CTC replied that they would not go on strike.[20] Leaders of the most strategic railroad unions, including most unions in the machine shops, all those responsible for train operation and communication, and even the union of maintenance-of-way workers, which previously seemed to favor a strike, said they would stay on the job. Only leaders of the carpenters' and coppersmiths' unions ignored the company's query and seemed to remain in favor of the strike declaration.

The responses meant a near unanimous vote against the CTC Executive Committee and Strike Committee and severely weakened strike preparations. The votes reopened the conflict between the trade unions and the local and division councils and forced individual union members to choose between the CTC leadership and their own union leaders. Union leaders also ordered their organizations to stop paying dues to the CTC, which would have been used to fund the strike, and they received funds from the FNM to sabotage the strike. By choosing sovereignty over solidarity, this time in direct cooperation with the FNM, the fifteen railroad unions that actively opposed the strike severely reduced the power of their own confederation. With strong opposition from leaders of the FNM, the Mexican state, rival unions, and most of their own union railroad union leaders, the CTC union leaders and members in favor of a strike made final preparations for the struggle in 1927.

The main objective of the CTC was to force the FNM to accept its demands by holding a national general railroad strike, which would stop railroad traffic as completely and continuously as possible over the greatest possible territorial and industrial expanse.[21] Significant opposition to the strike, limited time, and scarce funds for promotion were the key determinants of what strike tactics the CTC deployed. The CTC Strike Committee intended to lead a spatially and temporally staggered strike by zones, as local strike committees named by the

CTC division councils would begin successive waves of strikes to the FNM's corresponding divisions, with the final stage being a general strike in Mexico City.

Once the strike reached the center of the nation and the railroad system, the goal was to prolong the struggle and exhaust the FNM so that it would give in to the strikers' five demands. This would give the CTC time to raise funds, prepare committees, and dispatch organizers to various parts of the national railroad system during the strike. The committee's determination that the strike would happen in a wave-like motion over space and time, sequentially and centripetally from outer points to a central point rather than simultaneously or centrifugally, substantially increased the complexity of the struggle. At the same time, no plan could fully determine the actual course of the strike, as the struggle developed in directions that neither the strikers nor their opponents anticipated. Whether or not anyone could control this strike once it began, it threatened to overwhelm both its protagonists and antagonists.

The Strike as Hurricane and Vortex

The great general railroad strike proceeded like a natural disaster, wreaking havoc on the industry. This was partly by design and partly by accident: because the Strike Committee did not have full support of all divisions and locals, its decision to conduct the strike in a series of waves and surges meant it would be difficult, if not impossible, to control all of its aspects. The committee sought to use the workers' strategic power over transportation by withholding their labor in order to disable Mexico's most extensive and complex industry across all regions of the nation. The differences among the workers on strategy wrought additional chaos. The use of military by Mexican state leaders to support the FNM and CROM against the CTC and its strike intensified the violence of the struggle. The conflict began on Mexico's Gulf Coast, in the country's richest state and the site of the densest network of the nation's railroad transportation: Veracruz.

The national CTC strike broke out in Tierra Blanca, Veracruz, on February 18, 1927, with Próspero Mata, Samuel Rubio, Carlos Olaguíbel, Ignacio Ferniza, and Mario H. Hernández as its leaders.[22] The Strike Committee first sent Mexico City Escuadrón de Hierro member Pancho Berlanga to Tierra Blanca to support the strike. The Tierra Blanca station, terminal, and shops held a critical strategic position on the FNM's Veracruz al Istmo line. The Veracruz al Istmo line connected to several lines in the company's southeast division, including the Istmo de Tehuantepec line which ran between Mexico's Gulf and Pacific Coasts at Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, and Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, respectively. The

Veracruz al Istmo line also connected with the British company and line outside of the FNM's system, the Ferrocarril Mexicano, that connected the Port of Veracruz and Mexico City. Tierra Blanca also had indirect but close connections to three Veracruz ports, the rail line with the shortest distance between Mexico's two coasts, and a direct connection to a line outside of the FNM, which meant possibly involving another company in the strike. The CTC considered Tierra Blanca the best place to begin the strike for these reasons and because of the support of its members there, who had recent strike experience and would likely begin to strike more unanimously and rapidly than workers in other parts of the national railroad system.

On the first day of the strike on the Veracruz al Istmo line, according to Barrios, "the shops, offices, stations, and ways in Tierra Blanca were abandoned by its workers. Only the trainmen continued giving service." Pani painted a more uneven and fragmented picture of the situation in the first series of daily traffic bulletins to Morones on the CTC strike.[23] The majority of workers in the shops joined the UMM members already on strike. In the offices, the strike was more sporadic: on its first day only a clerk, a relay agent, a stenographer, an archivist, an assistant of a time-taker, a messenger, and a secretary of the railroad superintendent's aide left work. Among telegraphers, only one telegraph operator and one messenger struck while the rest of the office continued sending signals. No dispatcher struck. In the town's railroad station, only a cashier, an agent's aide, a ticket clerk, a baggage clerk, a warehouser, a checker, a messenger, four train car clerks, and five train car unloaders left the job. For the maintenance-of-way trackmen, the strike was more extensive, as 300 struck against their union's decision to oppose the strike. In agreement with Barrios, Pani noted that the trainmen did not second the strike.

In the connecting line south, along the Ferrocarril Nacional de Tehuantepec, Barrios admitted that the strike hardly took off. Only some trackmen struck on February 18, but not the track-foremen or supervisors. Strikes by shop and rail maintenance workers and some workers in the offices were not enough to immediately stop traffic. Dispatchers and telegraphers holding strategic positions in offices and workers operating trains continued to work, thereby reducing the strike's overall effectiveness. If any one or more of these kinds of workers had left the job, they immediately would have stopped traffic and made the strike a success, but they did not.

Along the Veracruz al Istmo and Tehuantepec lines, the first instances of the national strike were not strategic enough to alter traffic or even to slow it.[24] The Department of Labor inspector in Veracruz reported no irregular traffic

movement in Tierra Blanca's division on the day after the strike began. Pani reported that on February 20 trains "ran this day with total regularity," and that by February 21, "regardless of the strike movement declared in the Istmo Division, traffic has not suffered disruptions." By February 22, the Istmo division superintendent was confident enough about the strike's defeat in the Tierra Blanca offices to request that no more strikebreakers be sent to the offices. In the shops and along the tracks, where strikers were more numerous, the FNM responded with an overwhelming counteroffensive and in subsequent days mobilized trains with more than enough trackmen from Salina Cruz to cover those in and around Tierra Blanca. On February 24, the CROM provided 100 strikebreakers, with 150 more on the way. The effectiveness of strikers in the Tehuantepec division was not much different. On the night of February 18, strikers in Coatzacoalcos shut off water and light service by breaking wires of the port's electrical plant, but trains kept running as if nothing had happened. Through the end of February, trains in the Veracruz al Istmo and Tehuantepec divisions ran on time despite the continuity of the strike and additional strikers in those divisions.

In March, the work stoppages in both divisions rarely disrupted traffic, and when they did, it was because of the active derailing of trains. This was the case on March 4, when the Istmo division superintendent in Tierra Blanca reported the derailment of a train after strikers tore out spikes from a track. More effective at interrupting traffic were strikers near Santa Lucrecia who had stopped train traffic five times in the first third of the month by removing rails from parts of the Istmo line. On the night of March 11, they caused a two-hour delay by creating a stone roadblock in the train's path. The best strikers in the original division could do was slightly alter train movement. Rage and desperation soon gave way to murder and destruction.

On March 10, chief machinist Samuel Hernández was killed in the Tierra Blanca terminal station. The alleged murderers, UMM strikers Faustino Flores and Brígido Amador, fled to Oaxaca.[25] The next day a fire broke out in the terminal and nearly burned two combustible oil tanks, almost igniting 300 boxes of dynamite 50 meters away, and killing one worker.[26] While it was unclear who committed these acts, the FNM blamed a striker, Anacleto Tenorio, who also escaped. Ongoing violence between CTC strikers and CROM strikebreakers led to FNM company and Mexican state repression of the strike when Pani requested that Morones notify the secretary of war to forcibly seize the strikers' weapons.[27]

Losing control of the strike in its first region, the CTC sent Valentín Campa from Ciudad Victoria to Tierra Blanca to convince the workers to disarm and prevent further repression of the strike.[28] Campa succeeded in his first union

assignment for the CTC, but by then, the strike in Tierra Blanca was all but over. Except for a train derailed on April 14, nothing noteworthy happened with the strike in Tierra Blanca or anywhere in the Veracruz al Istmo division that month.[29] The strike in the southeastern part of the National Railways system was over by early May.[30] In most regions, the strike followed the pattern of discord and defeat seen in Veracruz.

The CTC strike of 1927 occurred throughout the twenty-one divisions of the National Railways, and its many workplaces, including offices, stations, terminals, roundhouses, shops, tracks, and trains. On February 22, workers at the strategic northern railroad division points at Torreón, Coahuila, and Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, began strikes on schedule with the CTC's plans to strike the entire north and northeast portion of the National Railways.[31] However, apart from Monterrey, Nuevo León, strikes in the north in Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango were even less extensive and effective than the strikes that began in Tierra Blanca.[32] More important strikes began in Puebla on February 23 on the Ferrocarril Interoceánico and quickly spread to Xalapa.[33]

Even more powerful strikes began in Aguascalientes, which housed the largest shops in the industry, on February 26 and in both Guadalajara and Mexico City on March 1.[34] By then, they were no longer exclusively local or regional incidents since they touched nearly every single region in the republic in coordinated action against the interconnected national system. Some places such as Chiapas, Guerrero, and Michoacán barely felt the strike, and others such as Sonora and Yucatán, not at all. However, when the strike hit Jalisco and the Federal District, it became a national incident, not just regional action. Still, the strike was not very strong in western Mexico, where the Cristero Rebellion overshadowed it. The strikes in other places followed paths similar to those that began in Veracruz but had a more dramatic ending in Mexico City.

When the CTC general strike culminated in Mexico City on March 1, 1927, it was more powerfully disruptive and effective than any of the other regional strikes against the FNM.[35] However, like the earlier strikes elsewhere, it was a partial strike, officially opposed by fifteen of the eighteen national railroad unions in the CTC. The CTC Executive Committee, headed by Barrios; the CTC's Mexico City Strike Committee, headed by Cirio Palafox; and the CTC Mexico City Division Council, headed by Jorge Díaz Ortiz, had limited support. Only four railroad union locals in Mexico City—besides that of the UMM—struck: the carpenters' Local 1; coppersmiths' Local 1; bricklayers' Local 4; trackmen Local 5; and individual workers from Locals 29 and 30 of the AFM, the office workers' union.[36]

The long-awaited and well-prepared strike in Mexico City was strongest in the Mexico City's shops, less powerful along the tracks and in the offices, and almost nonexistent in the terminal stations and trains.[37] In four of the city's large machine shop complexes, 114 workers struck Buenavista, 56 struck Colonia, 22 left work at Peralvillo, and 213 withdrew their labor at Nonoalco. In the Buenavista and Colonia shops, carpenters began the strike in the morning of March 1, but strikebreakers replaced a majority of them on the first day. At Nonoalco, bricklayers, carpenters, car repair people, and coppersmiths struck, but even among workers in these unions, the strike was not unanimous. In the maintenance-of-way department, nine carpenters and their helpers, and six blacksmiths and their helpers struck, but strikebreakers quickly replaced them. In the Colonia express department, thirty-one office workers struck as the workday began, but strikebreakers replaced them the same morning. Upon striking, these workers marched in columns to the CTC national building singing songs played by the activist and folksinger Concha Michel, which perhaps lifted spirits but could not disguise the strike's overwhelming challenges.

Since dispatchers, telegraphers, trainmen, and most office workers did not go on strike, trains in the México-Querétaro division of the FNM kept running in the first days of the strike and did not stop moving along their routes for any prolonged period. However, the work stoppages in the shops in unity with the UMM, in particular in Buenavista and Nonoalco, were powerful enough to indirectly affect traffic, to throw off the schedules of train movement and chronically slow down and delay train departure and arrival times for an entire month. By withholding their labor, Mexico City shop workers reduced traffic speeds by preventing essential machinery and repairs to rolling stock circulating within the city's railroad complex.

Train disruptions caused by the strike began on the evening of March 1 and continued for several days. For example, at 9:00 p.m., the strike delayed a train leaving the Nonoalco station by 65 minutes because it forced repairs to an engine that machinists had not made in the machine shop.[38] Then, a train scheduled to leave from Buenavista an hour later bound for Escobedo, Guanajuato, could not move until 4:00 a.m. At 10:30 p.m., the express train from Buenavista to Irapuato, Guanajuato could not leave because its locomotive engine was not ready. This forced the next train scheduled to leave the next day to stop and then be canceled altogether. The 10:30 p.m. train left at 12:45 p.m. on March 2. With slight variations, this pattern was repeated every day until March 23, when the company finally stabilized traffic in the México-Querétaro division. However, shop work stoppages destabilized it again on March 27, April 2, and

April 20, so that the company could not definitively regularize traffic until May. In contrast, since the strike barely touched the San Lázaro shops, trains leaving for Veracruz on the Ferrocarril Interoceánico consistently stayed on schedule in this same period.[39]

A controversy involving Hernán Laborde added an important symbolic dimension to the strike. Laborde had been an early member of the original Escuadrón de Hierro, the PCM, and the Comité Pro-Unificación Obrera (Pro-Labor Unification Committee, CPUO). In February 1927, the CTC leadership dispatched Laborde to lead the strike in the FNM's northeastern divisions.[40] He was tasked with joining with the CTC division councils on strike, helping the councils form strike committees, and providing instructions from the CTC Strike Committee on each division's role in the strike. Laborde's trip also became a clandestine speaking tour to convince workers to strike. In the northeastern cities of San Luis Potosí, Cárdenas, and Tampico, he met with the division councils, and at night spoke at CTC assembly meetings to organize and encourage the strike, before escaping by train to the next town.

After strikes broke out in each place after Laborde's meetings, agents reporting to the Federal District police detective Valente Quintana and the National Railways police chief, Juan N. Martínez, followed his trail from February 21 to 23.[41] The police profiles created for Laborde were enough for agents to seize him on February 24 on his way out of Tampico, headed to Ciudad Victoria, which had already struck, and Monterrey and Saltillo, which had not.[42] Agents apprehended Laborde at the Altamira, Tamaulipas, station and then escorted him to Mexico City.[43] Laborde was then placed under the custody of Martínez, who turned him over to the infamous Federal District police chief Roberto Cruz, the executioner of urban Catholic rebels later that year.[44] Martínez blamed Laborde for all acts of sabotage by strikers throughout the National Railways system, including places as far from his radius of activity as the Ferrocarril Interoceánico. Martínez concluded that Laborde was the "intellectual author" of these disruptions, that his conduct was "severely dangerous" for the maintenance of "public order," and that his pro-strike activity constituted "an act of rebellion against the General Government of the Republic."[45]

Despite Barrios's requests to Calles to secure Laborde's release, it was most likely Martínez's warnings to Cruz that convinced the police chief to move Laborde to the attorney general's office and, from there, to the Santiago Tlatelolco military prison on March 2.[46] Martínez's charges led Reynaldo Cervantes Torres of the Department of Labor to defend Laborde's imprisonment to Calles and to the origins of a myth about Laborde's powers to incite workers

that circulated long after Laborde's release.[47] Laborde was certainly an effective organizer and propagandist for the strike and, in that sense, he was a dangerous individual in an especially dangerous struggle. Still, while the charges against Laborde were disproportionate to his actual activity and abilities, the charges successfully justified his imprisonment in a military jail.

Barrios tried to obtain Laborde's release by requesting from a Federal District judge an *amparo*, a legal injunction for protection, that asked for the suspension of Laborde's term of imprisonment on March 4 and a trial.[48] When this failed, Laborde began a hunger strike on March 5 that reinforced his legend and won his release on March 12. Laborde's hunger strike became emblematic of the railroad strike as a whole and a moral victory for the strikers.

The Results and Legacies of the Struggle

When the strike arrived in Mexico City in March 1927, the CTC general solidarity strike had reached the limit of its physical extent and capacity to stop transport. The estimated number of strikers varied, but 20,000–25,000 of the FNM's more than 40,000 workers went on strike, including almost 7,000 in the shops.[49] While it was national and massive, the strike's industrial effectiveness, measured by its ability to disrupt traffic, was low. It was ineffective at stopping traffic by withholding labor because, while machinists had been on strike since the previous year, not enough of the other strategic workers inside and outside the shops struck. In the long run, complete strikes by train and track maintenance workers and repair workers in the shops and on the tracks could disrupt, slow, and eventually stop railroad traffic, but the FNM, Mexican state, and CROM union provision of military-protected strikebreakers in the shops and tracks kept traffic disruptions under control.

The strategically positioned machinists on strike did not need most railroad workers to strike in order to win. They only needed some, but not all, groups of workers in other departments with strategic positions to join to obtain victory. It is almost impossible to calculate exactly how many workers with strategic positions would have been needed to indefinitely stop traffic. However, if only a few conductors operating trains in one or more divisions had gone on strike, or if a few dispatchers and telegraphers sending transport signals and maintaining train schedules in one or more divisions had joined them, the strike would have been far more effective than it was. Since the railroad unions that organized these workers did not strike and managed to keep their members from striking on their own, the action was severely limited. The CTC Strike Committee and

the Escuadrón de Hierro leading the few unions and numerous division councils that did strike could not overcome their industrially strategic limitations. This meant that they could not defeat the united forces of company, state, and unions opposed to the strike, which used economic, legal, political, military, and police measures to break the strike. Apart from the major exception of continually disrupted traffic in and around Mexico City, the strike was unable to simultaneously stop or slow traffic in all or even most of the important divisions of the National Railways for any extended period of time.

While the strike continued throughout the nation after its arrival in Mexico City in March 1927, it lost most of its momentum by the end of May. Pani stopped providing daily reports on the strike to Morones on May 10, and Cervantes Torres advised his Department of Labor inspectors to discontinue their daily telegrams on the strike's progress on May 18.[50] Unlike the united CSFRM strike of 1921, which occurred in a more favorable political context, the comparatively divided CTC strike of 1927 was not powerful enough to force the FNM or the Mexican state to negotiate over any of its original demands, including resolution of the UMM strike of 1926. Despite Barrios's requests for a favorable presidential intervention, President Calles refused to reply to any of the CTC's correspondence.[51]

Among its few victories, the strike allowed the CTC to continue to survive intact with a minimum degree of unity and prevented the total takeover and intended destruction of CTC by the CROM, state, and the FNM. The CTC strike also gave workers organized into independent unions, such as the railroad industry and other nationally strategic industries, valuable experience in how to struggle against companies, which led to the formation of powerful national industrial unions and successful strikes starting the following decade. However, the CTC's strike failed to win any of its main stated objectives: union recognition, contracts, bargaining rights, or resolutions of seventy-eight individual disputes, including resolution of the UMM strike of 1926. In fact, the FNM benefited from the strike by refusing to hire strikers after the strike, thereby saving on salary costs and preparing the way for job losses planned with the previous year's privatization of the company, coinciding with the national Mexican economy going into a recession.

The defeat and weakening of the CTC that resulted in unemployment for the strikers that the FNM refused to rehire and the CTC's inability to prevent the FNM's mass layoffs during the Great Depression resulted in innumerable personal tragedies.[52] Guillermo Treviño, a striker who was twenty years old at the time, remembered that "There were terrible passages of misery and humiliation

that all of the trades suffered with honor for going on that strike. Little has been said about that, little has been mentioned about the suffering of those comrades whom we cowardly abandon."[53] For workers who decided to strike, the stigma that the struggle brought remained decades after the event.

Beyond the public defeats of its demands and the painful humiliation, misery, and suffering for strike veterans and other railroad workers, the strike was a failure. Railroad unions, as well as other independent unions, and the wider labor movement, including its dominant confederation, the CROM, all felt the failure. It displayed and reinforced the complex divisions within and among the railroad unions and its confederation, the CTC, and dramatized the discord of the national labor movement. By severely debilitating the railroad unions and the CTC, it prevented them from initiating any strike of equal force, leading the independent part of the labor movement, dominating the labor movement as a whole, or entering into powerful relationships with the agrarian movement in the short term. The timing coincided with a period when the Mexican state's crises intensified and when independent labor organizations and agrarian leagues began to align and Communists began to form alliances between them to antagonize the state. The strike's debilitation of the CTC at the beginning of critical years of crises weakened the unions and attempts at alliances between people's movements, causing damage to the movements themselves.

The immediate results of the CTC strike affected relations between unions, the state, and the law, which had long-term consequences for Mexican industrial relations.[54] The strike led the more moderate and conservative railroad union leaders to remove Barrios from union leadership, and the FNM blocked his employment in the railroad industry. Under these circumstances, Barrios, lawyer Antonio Garza Sansores, and others developed a legal strategy in defense of the unemployed strikers, which succeeded in gaining a favorable ruling from the Federal District court in the form of an amparo, a legal request of protection, in defense of unemployed strikers and against Secretary of Industry Morones.[55] When Morones appealed, the Supreme Court intervened in support of the federal court.[56] In anticipation of this ruling, President Calles decreed the creation of the Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje (Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, JFCA) in September 1927. The JFCA was intended to manage conflicts on a federal scale involving industries, companies, and labor organizations that had crossed inter-state boundaries or jurisdictions of the local boards created by the Constitution of 1917.[57]

The JFCA nationalized these local boards and, from then on, Mexican state leaders could use the JFCA to manage large-scale industrial strikes and other

conflicts, as well as all future labor conflicts that state leaders deemed federal. In response to the CTC strike of 1927, state leaders first used the JFCA to declare, "This conflict has not constituted, and does not constitute a strike, but rather an abandonment of work."[58] The JFCA later announced, "It cannot be said that a strike existed."[59] Legal conflicts over the CTC strike of 1927 and the ruling that the strike did not exist continued for several years.[60] In May 1929, unemployed former strikers protested and forced President Emilio Portes Gil to negotiate their return to work. FNM director Mariano Cabrera then released FNM Circular 64, which contradicted the president's plan, but also created a process for strikers to return to work and precedents for later favorable rulings by the JFCA and Supreme Court. However, Cabrera's successor, Javier Sánchez Mejorada, reversed these results and began mass layoffs in 1931.

The foundation of the JFCA in 1927 provided legal precedent for the creation of a Federal Labor Law in 1931, both of which continue to allow representatives of the Mexican state to legally regulate Mexico's industrial relations and conflicts.[61] The legal and institutional framework they established facilitated the creation of national industrial unions. Due to the early efforts of Barrios and other veterans of the 1927 strike, the railroad workers and unions transformed the CTC into Mexico's first national industrial union, the Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros de la República Mexicana (Union of Railroad Workers of the Mexican Republic, STFRM), in 1933.[62]

The STFRM was the original basis and support for the formation of national industrial unions in the mining and oil industries in 1934 and 1935. Along with the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México (Unitary Union Confederation of Mexico, CSUM), founded in 1929 by Barrios and other Communist unionists, the STFRM and these other industrial unions in turn served as the industrial bases for the foundation of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Workers of Mexico, CTM) in 1936.[63] The CTC strikers' promotion of industrial unionism from 1927 therefore had long-term effects on the transition toward a state-managed system of industrial relations where one confederation of industrial unions dominated. The continued existence and strength of the STFRM and CTM nearly a century later are testimony to the enduring legacy of the CTC strike on Mexico's industrial labor movement.

The CTC strike additionally had long-term results for the Mexican state and the CROM.[64] Despite its divisions and defeat, the CTC strike confronted the Mexican state with a serious people's movement challenge just as it was fighting a serious religious war against the Cristeros. It also reduced the ability of state leaders to manage their succession crisis. The role of post-revolutionary Mexican

state leaders in the defeat of the strike, as well as antagonism toward other people's movements of the time, undermined claims that the state was popular and revolutionary. In addition, the strike, by defeating the CROM's attempts to take over the railroad unions, revealed the CROM's alliance with the FNM, the state, and the military. In doing so, it damaged the CROM's credibility as a defender of unions against companies, dramatized its violent alliance with the FNM and the state, and initiated its near total decline. These results culminated in the destruction of the CROM's historic alliance with the Mexican state in 1928. This meant that when state leaders created a nationally allied party in 1929, they did so without strong labor movement alliances.

The CTC strike also mattered to the PCM as it transitioned away from the United Front.[65] The strike had important consequences for the relationships Communists formed with strategic parts of the labor and agrarian movements. Communist leadership of the strike allowed the PCM to build a long-term Communist cadre among workers in the railroad industry and to draw its own leadership from that cadre. For example, two members of the Escuadrón de Hierro who participated in the 1927 CTC strike, Laborde and Campa, later became important leaders of the PCM. Laborde was secretary general of the PCM in 1929–39. Campa was a significant PCM union leader for much of the next half century. Both remained consequential figures for the Mexican Left during and after World War II. However, in the short term, the CTC strike damaged the PCM.

In addition to Barrios being fired by the FNM and being removed from the CTC leadership, Communist leaders were removed from the most strategic part of the labor movement and forced into other forms of struggle. Communist strike veterans like Barrios and Laborde instead engaged in legal defense of unemployed strikers and organized them toward a national industrial railroad union. They also organized a fraction of the railroad unions into a Communist political party, the Partido Ferrocarrilero Unitario (Unitary Railroad Worker Party, PFU), to take part in the elections in favor of Obregón and steer workers away from the military candidates and the CROM.[66] Using the PFU and other avenues, Communists politicized workers in independent unions, first in favor of Obregón's election campaign and then toward independent alternatives, which culminated in unique alignments and relationships within and beyond the labor movement.

In 1927–29, these connections were not only facilitated by the Mexican state's growing crisis and the Communists' adoption of global revolutionary changes, but also by forms of solidarity that emerged from the CTC strike. The strike

was able to generate solidarity and support from other independent labor organizations against the CROM that later helped these labor organizations unify as an independent alternative as the CROM declined. At the beginning of its strike in February 1927, the CTC leaders exaggerated when it claimed that "all autonomous union organizations are with us," but the CTC strike allowed several national, regional, and industrial labor organizations, especially those led by other Communists, to join in symbolic solidarity.[67]

Organizations that publicly supported the CTC strike included the Confederación Obrera de Jalisco (Labor Confederation of Jalisco, COJ), which grouped local labor organizations like the miners in that state led by the Communist painter David Alfaro Siqueiros; the Federación Obrera de Tampico (Labor Federation of Tampico, FOT), which included oil workers in the Sindicato "El Águila" union, tramway workers, and electrical workers; and coal miners in Coahuila, who even struck in 1927 in solidarity with the CTC. When the CTC strike reached Mexico City, the anarchist Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT) mobilized its local telephone, tramway, textile, and bakery workers for a brief solidarity strike of its own.[68] However, the CGT quickly withdrew its support for the CTC. The aid offered by the regional and industrial union organizations was more nominal than effective.

Still, multiregional solidarity from unions in the mining and oil industries for the national struggle in the railroad industry helped fortify nationwide union connections. These connections eventually became the basis for the industrial-powered national labor movement, first as an autonomous force against the CROM, such as through the CSUM, in 1929, and finally as the CTM in 1936. Through its relations with the PCM, the CTC was supported by its Soviet counterpart, the Joint Union of Rail and Water Transport Workers (Tsektran).[69] This international labor solidarity caused a scandal in the Mexico City press, diplomatic troubles for the Soviet Ambassador to Mexico Alexandra Kollontai, and further state opposition against the striking workers, but the Soviet donation helped the CTC temporarily relocate its union hall.

Beyond the labor movement, the CTC won agrarian solidarity from the Liga Nacional Campesina (National Peasant League, LNC). Following its founding pledge to "establish relations of solidarity with organized workers and cooperate with them in all of their struggles," the LNC's most important organization, the agrarian league in Veracruz, led the call for agrarian solidarity when it demanded Calles grant a favorable resolution to the CTC's strike.[70] An LNC affiliate in Tamaulipas also burned a bridge and derailed a train in solidarity. Agrarian solidarity with labor organizations did not alter the course of the railroad strike or

lead to any powerful national labor-agrarian alliance. The substantial divisions and challenges to strength and unity within the labor movement, and between the labor and agrarian movements, continued to limit and divide movements in the following years. The solidarity that the strike generated was very limited compared to the much greater divisions that it reinforced.

In the immediate term, the CTC strike of 1927 was most debilitating for the labor movement. It was damaging for the CROM. The strike also diminished the power of the CTC, the leading representative of the most industrially strategic and independent part of the labor movement. The strike also removed the PCM's leadership of the CTC. Each of these debilitating results reduced the already low probability that any union or other labor organization would unite the labor movement as a whole. These results also made it unlikely that the PCM or any labor organization would form a strong alliance with the LNC or the wider agrarian movement, to overcome more powerful state forces and crises.

CHAPTER 4

Global Revolutionary Strategy and National Revolutionary Crisis

As the great transport and Communication Strike against the National Railways ended, the railroad unions, other independent labor organizations, and the agrarian leagues began to align under Communist leadership and to change the ways that people's movements struggled. They did so partly in response to the Mexican state, which was in the process of confronting several national and international crises. The state, represented by the government of Plutarco Elías Calles, had to reckon with the aftermath of the railroad strike, the rise of the Cristeros again in a mass insurrection, US threats to intervene against Mexican control of US oil properties, and conflicts over presidential succession. After former president Álvaro Obregón arranged for the constitution to be changed so that he could run again for the presidency, numerous political factions made decisions on whether to support Obregón's reelection, run independent electoral campaigns, or resist by other means. The state-allied parts of the labor movement and the agrarian movement divided over support for Obregón, contributing to myriad succession conflicts. These conflicts worsened over time and ultimately forced state leaders to make enormous changes to weather subsequent crises. Based on its assessment of growing global crises, the Communist International (Comintern) simultaneously made consequential changes to its global strategy, which called for revolutionary alliances between labor and agrarian movements. This chapter traces the complex ways that the independent parts of these people's movements in Mexico took advantage of these global strategic changes and national state crises to strengthen themselves. Their increasingly strategic responses to the unfolding state crises significantly determined how and why a series of new organizations originated in the early years after the Mexican Revolution.

The Global Socialist Offensive

In 1927–29, the Comintern made a momentous transition away from the United Front to a revolutionary offensive. This strategic change generated substantial

conflicts within the Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, PCM), and it highly influenced the ways the independent labor and agrarian organizations that Communists led began to connect and respond to the Mexican state. The most important venue for this change was the Comintern's Sixth World Congress, held in Moscow, from July 17 to September 1, 1928. Here, the Comintern publicly launched its Global Socialist Offensive.[1] Influenced by the Socialist Offensive that Joseph Stalin and the Soviet leadership launched in the USSR, the Global Socialist Offensive was an organized and forceful campaign designed to replace capitalism with socialism and to bring revolutionary movements into power worldwide, displacing imperialism.

The deliberations and decisions of the Comintern's Sixth Congress interpreted global capitalism and imperialism as having entered an era of disorder and destabilization a decade after the conclusion of the First World War, in what it called a Third Period of crisis. The congress forecast an era of diminished capitalist fortunes on a global scale and increased class warfare between industrial workers and capitalists throughout the world, which it characterized with slogans like "Class Against Class." It also predicted intensified revolutionary struggles in different international arenas, including anti-colonial and national liberation struggles against global empires. In its view, this would mean the beginning of a global revolution for socialism and communism against capitalism and imperialism, with the attendant destruction of colonial empires and decolonization of the colonial world.

The Comintern called on its Communist Parties to keep organizing for "the unity of the working class" through the "United Front from Below" and to use future revolutionary situations to "lead the working class to the revolutionary struggle for power."[2] It also demanded increased Bolshevization of its parties, renewed defense of the USSR, preparation for future imperialist wars, and struggle against fascism and most kinds of reformism.

Overall, the Global Socialist Offensive urged the Communist Parties to immediately and uncompromisingly increase their revolutionary activity even, and especially, before any actual or visible outbreak of crisis. The Comintern's associated international institutions adopted similar positions around the same time. The most important of those institutions for labor and agrarian movements throughout the world were the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern), founded in 1921 and led by Russian Solomon A. Lozovsky, and the International Peasant Council (Krestintern), founded in 1923 and led by Polish Tomasz Dąbal (Thomas Dombal). During the Profintern's Fourth Congress in Moscow in March–April 1928, Lozovsky and labor delegates emphasized a revolutionary strike strategy to fight the class struggle against capitalists and also supported

the creation of an international revolutionary labor movement against reformist leaders of labor movements.[3] In 1929, the Krestintern's then secretary-general, Bulgarian Vasil Kolarov, emphasized the Revolutionary Alliance of the Workers and Peasantry as critical to the overall Global Socialist Offensive. It was meant to have special significance for mostly rural countries that were still highly dependent on non-industrial agriculture, such as China, Poland, and Romania, as well as Mexico and other Latin American countries, but it was also meant to be relevant "in the majority of capitalist countries."[4]

That same year, Latin American Communists, including Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros, formally adopted and adapted the Global Socialist Offensive for deployment in Latin America during a labor congress held in Montevideo in May and at a conference of Communist Parties in Buenos Aires in June.[5] After the Comintern Executive Committee's turn to even more revolutionary immediacy at its Tenth Plenum in July 1929, the PCM Central Committee adopted similar positions at its own July 1929 Plenum.[6] The strategic change to a revolutionary offensive therefore permeated the Comintern, its Communist Parties, and affiliated international institutions and their member organizations, including in Mexico and other Latin American countries, before the onset of the Great Depression.

Mexico, Latin America, and Global Revolutionary Struggle

The Global Socialist Offensive placed a strong emphasis on what the Comintern called colonial and semi-colonial regions, including Mexico and other parts of Latin America.[7] This emphasis was made clear in the main congress reports, discussions, and decisions on "Questions of the Latin-American Countries."[8] The Comintern's main commentator on Latin America, Swiss delegate Jules Humbert-Droz, presented the initial report on Latin America, but delegates from Mexico, Latin America, and elsewhere in the world severely criticized it and argued that its content contained errors and omissions.[9] The most important result of the congress discussions on Latin America and other colonial and semi-colonial regions was the Comintern's development and publication of the "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies," which put forward the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance.[10] The mass mobilization of people's movements for revolution and resistance in China and India for decolonization and national liberation struggles during these years were extremely important to people's movements throughout the world. Mobilization in China and India also caused the Comintern to prioritize East and

South Asia above other regions in its theses. At the same time, the theses also displayed the Comintern's increased interest in Mexico and other Latin American countries in its plans for world revolution.

The theses made specific and detailed recommendations on organizational forms for these colonial regions. For example, it called on Communist Parties throughout the colonial and semi-colonial world to form revolutionary unions, recast agrarian movements, and "find out and apply those organizational forms of bloc between workers and peasants" most appropriate to each national setting. The concrete recommendation was usually to create some kind of worker and peasant bloc, in which Communist Parties would maintain its "leading role" and ensure the "hegemony of the proletariat" in all alliances involving movements. For Latin America, including Mexico, the goal of Communist Parties was to lead the revolutionary movements and to promote "mutual cooperation between all the revolutionary mass organizations of workers and peasants." The theses included a brief program for the Communist Parties and allied movements to follow for building broad multi-class revolutionary alliances and coalitions. This global strategic change consisted not only of general orders, guidelines, and protocols, but also specific interpretations and decisions for implementation in Mexico.[11]

Edgar Woog was the Comintern's main representative to Mexico and its Communist Party, and he was critical in defining how the Global Socialist Offensive would matter in Mexico.[12] Woog took part in debates that the Comintern sponsored leading up to and in preparation for its Sixth Congress on "The Mexican Question" and "The Mexican Revolution," in addition to writing two detailed manuscript reports in French and German that elaborated on the Comintern's revolutionary plans for Mexico. On July 7, 1928, Woog's message to the South American Sub-Commission of the Comintern exemplified the approach to strategic change for a revolutionary offensive in Mexico. The timing was important because it was a week after Obregón's reelection, ten days before his assassination, and ten days before the opening of the Comintern's Sixth World Congress. In his presentation, Woog clearly articulated one of the most critical historical and interpretative questions for modern Mexico: "What is the character of the Mexican Revolution?"[13]

Woog sharply disagreed with other commentators, especially Humbert-Droz; Bulgarian Stoian Minev, alias "Jean Chavaroche" and "Stepanov"; and the Russian Sergei Ivanovich Gusev, alias "Travin." He characterized the Mexican Revolution as "a bourgeois democratic agrarian revolution, where the motive force is the peasantry, and a revolution that is, at the same time, anti-imperialist owing to the fact that Mexico is a semi-colonial country under the influence of

American and English imperialism," neither proletarian nor socialist, but with "elements of proletarian revolution" that might be extended. Woog saw Mexico as similar to other Latin American countries that had not experienced revolutions in that, under pressure from imperialism, it could not produce a legitimate or powerful national bourgeoisie, only an illegitimate and comparatively small, petit-bourgeoisie. By the 1920s, contemplating the regimes of Obregón and Calles, he considered their aspirations to represent a national bourgeoisie as no longer capable of maintaining "hegemony in the revolution." For Woog, this meant that the PCM had to win the "hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution" in alliance with the peasantry, through the "crystallization of the worker and peasant movement," which alone would allow "for a revolution of a truly proletarian, anti-imperialist, socialist type."

The "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies," Woog's interpretations, and specific decisions that the Comintern sent to the PCM defined the ways the Global Socialist Offensive would be deployed in Mexico. With its emphasis on the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance, this change from the United Front to a revolutionary offensive directly impacted the PCM and the development of the independent parts of the labor and agrarian movements in Mexico. For example, in 1928, following Woog's interpretations and, most likely, correspondence from him, the Comintern encouraged the PCM to form a workers and peasants bloc in Mexico to promote alliances between the labor and agrarian organizations that its members led.[14] After the Sixth Congress ended that autumn, with its public theses on the colonial and semi-colonial world, the PCM began to focus on the creation of the Bloque Obrero y Campesino (Worker and Peasant Bloc, BOCN) in January 1929. The transition from the internationally defined Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Alliance to the national Worker and Peasant Bloc exemplified the ways in which Comintern organizers like Woog made the Global Socialist Offensive relevant to movements in Mexico.

The former Soviet ambassador to Mexico Stanislav Pestkovsky was Woog's rival in the Comintern. In perhaps the first complete Marxist interpretation of Mexico and the Mexican Revolution, published in Russian in the Soviet Union in 1928, Pestkovsky demonstrated the ways that global revolutionary tendencies and trajectories influenced strategic thought and action in relation to Mexico.[15] Pestkovsky concluded that "The main weakness of the Mexican Revolution is the absence of a united worker-peasant front . . . which can be resolved only from below, by way of, or on, the initiative of the worker and peasant masses."

Woog and Pestkovsky were personally involved with international conflicts involving movement organizing in Mexico during this period, which gives their interpretations as international actors unique value. Woog's intellectual output was voluminous and varied, including written letters, manuscript reflections, transcribed statements, and recordings. They were intended to directly impact the development of movements in Mexico.

In addition to Woog and Pestkovsky other agents and organizers, including some shadowy characters, played significant roles in adapting the Comintern's strategic change to Mexico. Italian Comintern agent Vittorio Vidali, alias "Carlos Contreras" and "Enea Sormenti," became a PCM leader during his time in Mexico in 1927–30 and was one of the PCM's delegates at the Comintern's Sixth Congress in 1928.[16] Soviet Comintern agent Mikhail Grollman, alias "Oswald" and "Pedro," who had been in Mexico in 1925, also took part in the Comintern's Sixth Congress and was sent to Mexico in the spring of 1929, where he moved the PCM even closer to revolutionary immediacy.[17]

Partly because of the scarcity of texts and other theoretical resources in Mexico at that time, the formation of Mexican intellectuals to creatively adapt and develop global revolutionary strategy did not happen then. It did, however, take place in Peru, as witnessed by the work of the Peruvian Marxist intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui. Specific Peruvian circumstances and Mariátegui's study, travel, and experiences with national and international revolutionary movements, and the diffusion of concepts associated with the Global Socialist Offensive in Peru led him to author the era's most brilliant historical and theoretical interpretations of national realities by a Latin American intellectual. His *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, published in Lima in 1928, dealt with agrarian, indigenous, and cultural questions in ways that were original and relevant to people's movements and revolutionary struggles in Peru and beyond.[18] Mexican Communists knew of Mariátegui and tried to communicate with him, but they had no similar intellectual among them to develop the current global revolutionary strategy for people's movements in Mexico, and they knew it. Mexican and other Latin American leaders and members of the PCM were nonetheless immediately aware of the major strategic changes of their time and actively engaged in their development and deployment through increased international travel, communication, and exchange.

The PCM's main leaders in the 1920s, Manuel Díaz Ramírez and Rafael Carrillo—allies of Woog and Pestkovsky, respectively—represented Mexico and the PCM at the Comintern's Sixth Congress.[19] Díaz Ramírez and Carrillo criticized

competing international Communist perspectives on Mexico and the Mexican Revolution and complained about the absence of resources, including relevant texts in Spanish. However, they did not develop perspectives of their own or make lasting suggestions about how to apply revolutionary strategy to Mexico. Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros and a Cuban revolutionary exile in Mexico, Julio Antonio Mella, did not make consequential suggestions either, but they played more important roles than Díaz Ramírez and Carrillo in bringing the Global Socialist Offensive to Mexico.

Global Revolutionary Constellations

Although Rivera and Siqueiros did not contribute original strategies of their own in the late 1920s, they had important roles in applying the revolutionary offensive in Mexico in part because of their international connections and artistic recognition. Rivera traveled to Moscow and attended the tenth anniversary celebration of the October Revolution, the Congress of Friends of the Soviet Union, and meetings of the Comintern and Profintern, where he spoke on Mexico, in November 1927.[20] At these gatherings, Rivera made connections with the highest levels of the Soviet hierarchy. His relationship with poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, based on the poet's earlier travels to Mexico, allowed Rivera and Siqueiros to formally meet with Stalin in May 1928. While in Moscow, Rivera also connected with the Soviet art world and joined the October Group of avant-garde artists. His relationship with Soviet People's Commissar for the Arts, Culture, and Education Anatoly Lunacharsky won him a commission to paint a mural for the Red Army. Another artistic relationship Rivera cultivated during this visit, with Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, led to the latter's visit to Mexico two years later and an unusual, unfinished experiment in Soviet cinematography of Mexico.

Rivera's engagement with conflicts in the Soviet art world, however, lost him his Red Army mural commission. It also initiated a series of international conflicts with Soviet authorities that became more relevant a decade later, such as those related to Leon Trotsky's exile and murder in Mexico. In the meantime, Rivera's Soviet travels exposed him to changes associated with the Global Socialist Offensive, like the Comintern's recommendation for a worker and peasant bloc. When Rivera returned to Mexico, he became president of the BOCN, which began its presidential campaign in January 1929.

Rivera abandoned the BOCN and its campaign before the elections, and then the PCM expelled him that fall, in part for taking a Mexican state mural

commission after the violent state repression of the PCM and its allied organizations. This commission was for his monumental mural on the history of Mexico at the National Palace in Mexico City. Rivera also accepted a commission to paint a mural for the US ambassador and former J.P. Morgan executive Dwight W. Morrow in Cuernavaca at the former palace of the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés. Subsequent invitations to paint and exhibit throughout the United States, including major commissions from the Rockefellers and a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, proved far more successful than his artistic connections and commissions in the Soviet Union or his electoral organizing and movement leadership in Mexico. As before, Rivera's commitment to art mattered more than his commitments to movements.

Siqueiros was more committed to organizing and movements than Rivera. Based on his previous experience as a union leader and organizer of struggles involving Jalisco miners, he focused on the way global strategic changes mattered to labor movements in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.[21] In the spring of 1928, Siqueiros led the Mexican delegation to the Profintern's Fourth Congress in Moscow. There, he took part in a conference of Latin American unionists in preparation for a continental conference in Latin America. He remained in close contact with Lozovsky on union strategy after returning to Mexico and helped organize the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México (Unitary Union Confederation of Mexico, CSUM). These international connections led to support for Siqueiros's leadership of the CSUM in January 1929. Later that spring, the same connections gave him a platform for representing Mexican Communist concepts at Latin American Communist meetings in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, though his views diverged substantially from those of his comrades in Mexico.

Siqueiros later abandoned the CSUM, and after the PCM's further turn to the left in the summer of 1929, the PCM expelled him for personal, political, and security reasons in 1930. After spending time in a Mexican prison, Siqueiros was deported from Mexico as well as from the United States and Argentina. He then began decades of exile and international travels, including voluntary military service for Republicans during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s. After Diego Rivera and his wife, artist Frida Kahlo, hosted Leon Trotsky during his exile in Mexico, Siqueiros led an assassination attempt on Trotsky in May 1940 before others assassinated him that August. Siqueiros then went into exile again, moving to different locations in Latin America before finally returning to Mexico.

Cuban revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella, exiled in Mexico from 1926 to 1929, also played a critical role in connecting the Global Socialist Offensive to

Mexico, though his activities had broader regional and global dimensions.[22] He was part of a revolutionary migration to Mexico based on the country's international relations with the USSR and Mexico City's growing status as a global center for anti-imperialist organizing. In the early 1920s, Mella was a youth and student leader in Havana and was associated with nationalist and anti-imperialist movements. In 1925, Mella joined with others to found Cuba's first Communist Party. He was subject to a trial because of his Communist views and activities and led a hunger strike against the trial decisions. He went to Mexico in exile in 1926 when his party suspended him and after receiving death threats.

Mella quickly joined the PCM, which worked to resolve his conflicts with its Cuban counterpart, and he began organizing for the Liga Anti-Imperialista de las Americas (Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas, LAI or LADLA) alongside Rivera. From his base in Mexico City, Mella, alongside other Cuban and Venezuelan exiles, planned armed expeditions to overthrow regimes in Havana and Caracas, engaged in polemics against Peruvian exile Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and Mexican labor intellectual Vicente Lombardo Toledano, and organized solidarity for Augusto César Sandino's revolutionary army in Nicaragua. Mella also took part in several other international initiatives, including the campaign to free Italian radicals Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the United States, for which Mexican authorities briefly jailed him.

Mella's travels to Europe in 1927 brought him in closer contact with Soviet and Comintern-associated institutions and meetings, like the World Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism in Brussels and the International Red Aid Congress in Moscow. Especially after his return to Mexico in late 1927, Mella entered into several conflicts and alliances with members and leaders of the Comintern and Profintern as he applied the Global Socialist Offensive to Mexico. This led to disputes about Mella's attempts to apply experiences in China to Mexico, which the Comintern and Woog rejected. He was also at the center of conflicts within the PCM over union strategy. During the Comintern's Sixth Congress in 1928, Mella stayed in Mexico City to lead the PCM while Carrillo represented the PCM in Moscow. In that role, Mella continued to support internationally inspired changes to the PCM's union strategy by promoting the formation of the CSUM. In January 1929, days before the CSUM was created, Mella was assassinated in downtown Mexico City alongside his partner, Italian Communist photographer Tina Modotti. The CSUM named him its honorary leader and martyr. Cuban dictator Gerardo Machado presumably ordered the assassination, and his agents committed the crime.

The Origins of Revolutionary Antagonism

As the Comintern made the transition from the United Front to the Global Socialist Offensive, the political changes and their relevance for Mexico were made clear by individuals such as Woog, Pestkovsky, Vidali, Grollman, Díaz Ramírez, Carrillo, Rivera, Siqueiros, and Mella. Global factors affected the ways the PCM interacted with the labor and agrarian movements in Mexico and influenced the very limited ways it attempted to develop its own revolutionary strategy in response to Mexican state's crises. Mexican Communist awareness of global strategic changes increased the PCM's capacity to organize, lead, and form alliances with independent labor and agrarian organizations and to respond to the state.

During the 1920s, the PCM grew from only a few hundred members to over 3,000, increased its power over people's organizations, and expanded its distribution of *El Machete* to a 12,000-issue weekly print run. By the spring of 1928, the PCM finally passed 1,000 members in thirty-one locals, and in late 1928, after a series of recruitment campaigns, it grew to 2,000 members in over forty locals scattered throughout the country. By the spring of 1929, it had jumped to over 3,000.[23] However, the Comintern's global revolutionary influences and connections were nowhere near enough to fortify the PCM's membership or leadership. Nor could they overcome the absence of Marxism and the power of other intellectual, ideological, and political influences; the power of the state; and the serious divisions within the labor and agrarian movements. Despites its greater focus on Mexico and other Latin American countries in 1928, the Comintern did not provide essential economic resources, nor other critical resources such as organizers and texts in Spanish. When the Comintern moved farther toward revolutionary immediacy in the summer of 1929, it still did not provide sufficient resources, which made the PCM even more vulnerable. It is possible that the Comintern sacrificed the PCM to avoid endangering Mexican-Soviet relations, but the consequences of the Comintern's and the PCM's strategic changes eventually led Mexican state leaders to violently repress the PCM and end Soviet relations anyway.

International influences also worsened the PCM's condition through internal discord from 1927 to 1929. Actors like Woog and Pestkovsky were important in defining how international changes would apply to Mexico in ways that supported the unity and alliances of labor and agrarian movements, and, eventually, the autonomy of the PCM and movements away from the state. However, international agents like Woog and Pestkovsky also engaged in conflicts that had deleterious effects on the PCM and the parts of movements that its

members influenced. PCM leaders like Díaz Ramírez, Carrillo, Rivera, Siqueiros, and Mella were highly aware of and intimately involved in the global strategic changes, but they all proved incapable of transforming the PCM into a powerful, independent, or revolutionary force with lasting powers over labor and agrarian movements.

In the spring of 1929, conflicts and controversies within the PCM and the parts of movements under its influence, as well as violent state repression, underscored these limitations and foreclosed any possibility for even partial unity or alliances between labor and agrarian movements. The PCM's revolutionary decisions against the Mexican state and the Mexican state's outright repression of the PCM in the summer of 1929 proved fatal. This antagonism fragmented the parts of movements that had begun to align earlier in the year and contributed to their demise.

Unity and Division in Response to State Crises

In the spring of 1927, the PCM continued to conditionally support the Mexican state according to the United Front, against what it considered greater threats, and so was unable to develop an independent or coherent response against the state. As the PCM moved away from its anarchist-influenced refusal to participate in Mexican electoral politics, it backed the Obregón government against the de la Huerta Rebellion and supported Calles as Obregón's successor in 1924. At the same time, it oscillated between attacking and defending the state and its changing governments in the pages of *El Machete* and otherwise. For example, in a published summary of its Third Congress in spring 1925, the PCM forecast a military-religious revolt, criticized the Catholic Church as a dangerous reactionary force, and partly blamed the state for the antagonism, but still implied its own support for the state.[24] However, in headlines from earlier in the year and following the Third Congress, it forcefully condemned the state and denounced the Calles government as a treacherous collaborator with imperialism.[25] At its Fourth Congress in spring 1926, the PCM's response was moderate and indirect: it defined the state represented by the Calles government as capitalist but not fully under the control of imperialism, so the PCM suggested support of the Mexican state against imperialism.[26] The PCM kept up this focus on anti-imperialism into 1927 when it accused the United States of colluding with the Catholic Church to overthrow Calles and violate Mexican sovereignty.[27] The PCM's early responses to the Cristero Rebellion were generic and antagonistic.

At its Fifth Congress in late April 1927, the PCM, still under the leadership of Rafael Carrillo, reviewed the nation's entire political situation, including international relations, people's movements, and the legacies of the Mexican Revolution.[28] Offering positions with some resonances with past statements, the PCM contended that the Mexican state was controlled by a weak national bourgeoisie, but it considered US imperialism in alliance with Mexican conservatism to be a greater danger and enemy. It referred to this conservatism as "the reaction," which it considered to include the Mexican military, the Catholic Church, and the rural Catholic rebels that became known as the Cristeros. At this congress, the PCM called for a "close alliance of the entire proletarian class with the small bourgeoisie, to defend the current government against the attacks from the reaction, and against the threat of an American intervention."[29]

At this congress, the PCM continued to follow the Comintern's United Front and promoted the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance as central to its political response. This meant that supporting unity within and between the labor and agrarian movements, including the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM) and its independent labor antagonists like the Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT) and the Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (Confederation of Transportation and Communication Workers, CTC), and the agrarian organizations represented by both the Partido Nacional Agrarista (National Agrarian Party, PNA) and the Liga Nacional Campesina (National Peasant League, LNC). The PCM called on these organizations to form an all-inclusive Mexican United Front toward a worker and peasant bloc to build "A Wall of Defense Around the Calles Government Against the Reaction."[30] This was one of the PCM's most supportive statements about the Mexican state and the Calles government, and it did not preview any move against the state or government. It also made no clear statement on the upcoming elections or potential candidates except to request the delay of elections until the reaction could be defeated. In the statement, the PCM avoided mention of the extreme conflicts between these different organizations, which would have prevented unity to defend the government. After the Comintern launched its Global Socialist Offensive at its Sixth World Congress, and in response to Mexican state crises, the PCM reversed its position when it antagonized the Mexican state and government, and transformed this proposed alliance into an actual organization against the state. However, in spring 1927, the PCM's proposal was for united labor and agrarian movement support for the Mexican state against threats at home and from abroad.

In summer and fall 1927, as Obregón's campaign ramped up and as military candidates General Arnulfo R. Gómez and General Francisco R. Serrano launched their campaigns, the PCM continued to support the Mexican state, but more conditionally than before. At a plenary meeting in July, the PCM leadership grudgingly supported Obregón's "frankly capitalist" campaign for president.[31] It claimed to not be Obregonista, had few hopes for his presidency, and only backed his candidacy for the reasons it had previously backed Calles's: against greater dangers from more powerful international and national enemies, especially the "reaction." The PCM later defended the Calles government's violent actions against the Gómez and Serrano campaigns and further consolidated its support for Obregón's campaign.[32] At the end of 1927, it also continued to call for alliances between labor and agrarian organizations in the United Front, but did not closely examine the difficulties of doing so, nor forcefully argue that movement unity was to either serve the Mexican state or oppose it, as it had earlier in the year.[33]

The PCM was also not able to fully align or coordinate the responses of the labor and agrarian organizations that its members led like the CTC and LNC, but its calls for broad unity and their coalescence around the Obregón campaign prepared the way for alliances the following year. During this first wave of crisis, the absence of powerful Mexican intellectuals, theoreticians, or able revolutionary politicians within the PCM was especially damaging. Lacking a figure like José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru, Communists in Mexico could barely respond to rapidly changing events. They could not offer meaningful historical interpretations nor contemporaneous analyses of the crises, nor develop a relevant revolutionary strategy, nor forecast how they might fight in the subsequent struggles.

In the spring of 1928, during the public conflicts between Obregón and CROM leader Luis N. Morones, the CROM carried out violent attacks on PCM organizers in Orizaba textile mills that the CROM controlled, including the murder of a PCM organizer and expulsions of workers from the mills.[34] Following the Fifth National Conference of its leadership in April, the PCM took a more critical stance toward both Obregón and Morones and began to develop an independent position toward the Mexican state, still represented by the Calles government. Nonetheless it still could not fully guide or unite the labor and agrarian organizations under its influence.[35] The labor movement remained divided and difficult for the Communists or any single group to unite. The CROM's close alliance with the Mexican state during Calles's government continued to split the labor movement between state-allied and independent forces. Morones's strong opposition to Obregón reinforced political divisions in

the labor movement and tended to move the independent labor organizations toward support for Obregón's campaign. However, like the PCM, most of these organizations independent of the CROM could not offer a unified political response to the Mexican state's political crises or to the upcoming elections.

The most important of these independent organizations, the CTC, was so weakened by its strike in 1927 that it could barely keep itself together, much less unify politically for the elections. Many railroad union members supported the military candidates Gómez and Serrano against Obregón, while Communist railroad leaders and strike veterans mostly favored Obregón as they sought to continue their work to unify the labor movement. After the CTC strike, Elías Barrios, Hernán Laborde, and other Communist railroad union leaders and strikers who had previously formed the Escuadrón de Hierro and the Comité Pro-Unificación Obrera (Pro-Labor Unification Committee, CPUO) focused on legal defense for strike veterans, industrial union organizing, and political organizing for the elections. In the summer of 1927, they created a more formal PCM membership organization among railroad workers, which in turn organized a Communist railroad worker party, the Partido Ferrocarrilero Unitario (Unitary Railroad Worker Party, PFU), to support Obregón in the elections against Gómez, Serrano, and the CROM.[36]

The PFU began with 29 locals based in strategic railroad junctures throughout the nation and held its First Convention in Guadalajara in March 1928. Under the leadership of Laborde, who ran for local office in Orizaba, the PFU organized more deliberately for Obregón's campaign than the PCM itself. For the PFU, a vote for Obregón meant an attack on Calles and Morones for breaking the CTC strike and for supporting the CROM against independent labor organizations. The PFU's goal was to use the Obregón campaign and his likely victory to increase the power of independent unions. Following the PCM and the United Front, it also sought to form alliances between labor and agrarian organizations and to hold a National Worker and Peasant Congress that would create an allied political organization. As it campaigned for Obregón, the PFU built some support for PCM positions among workers and unions, supported the LNC's political position, and helped foster the beginnings of alignments between labor and agrarian organizations. However, the PFU did not represent the whole CTC or the other independent labor organizations, and it exemplified the limitations of projects to unite the unions and ally with the agrarian leagues in the time between the 1927 strike and the 1928 election.

The more unified LNC ensured that the agrarian leagues more uniformly supported Obregón's campaign. In 1927, Veracruz agrarian leaders Úrsulo

Galván and Manuel Almanza continued to lead the LNC while remaining PCM members, despite their earlier conflicts with the PCM leadership. Galván and the rest of the LNC leadership also retained close connections with former Veracruz Governor Adalberto Tejeda, who served as a member of Calles's cabinet.

The PNA, led by Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, remained allied to the Mexican state, but had been in conflict with the Calles government and the CROM, and it forcefully favored the candidacy of Álvaro Obregón. The PNA supported the LNC at its founding in 1926, but by 1927, the LNC had begun to displace the PNA as the most important agrarian organization in the nation. The LNC's political determinations also began to threaten the PNA, which sought to serve as the sole political voice of the agrarian movement. In early April 1927, the LNC released a circular to its members that announced its intention to define its political position on the elections, thus drawing opposition from the PNA and Díaz Soto y Gama.[37] In June 1927, it disregarded the PNA when it designed an agrarian program for the elections and chose its candidate, Obregón, without reservations.[38] In a private report in September to their Comintern-allied institution, the Krestintern, LNC leaders harshly criticized the PCM and uncritically praised Obregón.[39]

While both the PCM and LNC backed Obregón for president, the latter's more enthusiastic, unconditional public and private support suggested that the LNC was, as before, following the lead of the Mexican state rather than the PCM. Galván and Almanza's hopes that Obregón would fulfill promises to extend the state's agrarian reform affected the LNC's political choices more than the PCM's calls for unity and alliances between movements and organizations. Unlike the LNC's program of the previous year that had assented to Calles's move away from agrarian reform that promoted ejido distribution, Obregón's announcement of his candidacy allowed the LNC to reemphasize an increase in such distribution. By early 1928, the LNC had not altered its determination to fully engage in the political situation on a national scale and to offer overwhelming support for Obregón.

The Election and Assassination of Obregón

By the summer of 1928, it was clear that Obregón would win the presidential election with no real opposition. Obregón's supporters among the labor and agrarian movements were likely to increase their power at the expense of the CROM and Morones, as well as Calles. The PCM and the labor and agrarian organizations led by its members supported Obregón to varying degrees and

for different reasons. Although Obregón's campaign had begun to unite them politically, they had not agreed on nor worked out any real alliance or new organization that would represent them effectively. They were not prepared for the violent explosion of the Mexican state's crises after the election, despite the ongoing Cristero Rebellion, previous assassination attempts on Obregón by Catholic militants, or the executions of the rival candidates Gómez and Serrano.

Instead, the nominally uniform political alignment and consensus that independent labor organizations and agrarian leagues had constructed began to break down after Obregón's victory on July 1 and assassination on July 17. Obregón's death removed their main unifying factor and demonstrated the political inability of the PCM to bring or hold them together. After the PNA leader Díaz Soto y Gama increased attacks on Morones and the CROM after Obregón's assassination, and after Morones stepped down from Calles's government, the main state-allied labor and agrarian organizations lost their alliances with the state and went into decline. The PCM and Communist-led organizations like the CTC and LNC led tried to pick up the pieces of what remained of the labor and agrarian movements in the fall of 1928, but their divided responses to Obregón's death prevented them from fully taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the decline of the CROM and PNA.

The absence of an immediate, clear, and consistent response by the PCM to Obregón's election and assassination was most damaging. Given the PCM's resigned support for Obregón, it made few public comments before or after his electoral victory. In the last issue of *El Machete* before election day, the PCM did not even mention the election.[40] The next issue reported Obregón's victory and noted that it had happened "without incidents worthy of mention," since the results were foregone in the absence of other candidates.[41] The PCM only demanded respect for worker and peasant votes and candidates it supported in other races.[42] Two weeks after the election, the PCM said nothing substantive about the results or what it would do in the wake of the changed political situation.[43] Following this pattern of delay, not until ten days after Obregón's assassination did the PCM report it in *El Machete*.

When the PCM did publish a response, it began to encourage labor and agrarian movements to organize and take political positions independent of the Mexican state, which was still under the leadership of Calles. To do so, it again called for movements to unite in a worker and peasant bloc, but did not explain how this would happen or what it would imply.[44] In response to Morones's resignation from Calles's cabinet, and the decline of the relationships between the state and the CROM, the PCM condemned Morones and sought to prevent

subsequent state attacks on the CROM and the labor movement as a whole. The PCM recognized the role of Díaz Soto y Gama and the PNA in hastening the decline of Morones and the CROM, but it did not say much about the PNA or the agrarian movement. Most importantly, during this moment of crisis, the PCM provided no clear alternative to the Mexican state or its previously allied labor and agrarian organizations.

The absence of a comprehensive Communist response to Obregón's assassination and its immediate results meant the PCM lost critical opportunities to increase the unity and power of the Communist-led labor and agrarian organizations or to form alliances between them. The reasons for the PCM's delay were numerous but the most proximate was the fact that the PCM's leadership, including its National Secretary Rafael Carrillo, were attending the Comintern's Sixth World Congress in Moscow when Obregón was elected and assassinated. Carrillo's message from Moscow on this crisis admitted the difficulties in formulating a response, but it did not offer clear guidance, nor did it appear in *El Machete*.[45]

Independent labor organizations that had supported Obregón initially seemed to benefit from his electoral victory at the expense of Calles, Morones, and the CROM leadership, but they suffered most from his assassination. The CTC remained debilitated by the aftereffects of its strike, and, on the first day of 1928, Barrios ended his term as leader of this key organization in the labor movement, the most important rival of the CROM.[46] Obregón's assassination ruined the PFU that Barrios and other Communists organized after they lost control of the CTC. Laborde won his legislative position in Orizaba for the PFU, but the death of Obregón forced railroad workers and strike veterans to reduce their political organizing and refocus on industrial organizing and on seeking legal resolutions of their strike. Independent labor organizations in other industries and regions began to coalesce. These included organizations led by Communists and that had joined in solidarity with the CTC strike, such as unions of miners in Coahuila and Jalisco and oil workers in Tamaulipas and Veracruz. However, these independent organizations were not yet in a position to express common goals, much less provide a unified response to the crises of the state and the labor movement. They were not ready to serve as a clear alternative to the CROM nor to ally with the CROM membership against its leadership, as the PCM proposed.

In contrast to the PCM and independent labor organizations, the LNC, with its many agrarian leagues, moved immediately to benefit from Obregón's assassination. Still under the leadership of PCM member Galván, the LNC moved further away from the PCM and aligned closely with its main patron, Tejeda, who

had recently been reelected as governor of Veracruz, in calling for total support for incumbent President Calles.[47] The LNC increased its power by blaming the Catholic perpetrators of the crime, assassin José de León Toral and his accomplice La Madre Conchita, and taking an anti-clerical stance which was shared with Calles and Tejeda. These moves allowed the LNC to rise at the expense of both the CROM and PNA, which both lost their state alliances and declined as Díaz Soto y Gama blamed Morones for the crime rather than Catholic opponents of the state. On July 21, only four days after Obregón's assassination, the LNC called for a united front with Calles "to save our revolutionary conquests and assure the stability of our organizations" and for maximum retribution against Catholic individuals and institutions.[48] Then, on August 2, the LNC cautioned against political agitation and advocated for a delay for any future elections. The LNC followed Tejeda when he called for the "support for all acts" of Calles in a two-year extension of his presidential term.[49]

Going farther than the PCM's earlier call for "a wall of defense" around the Calles government, and against moves by the PCM and labor organizations toward greater independence from the Mexican state, the LNC used the crisis of Obregón's assassination to reinforce its alliance with the state and shore up its dominance over the agrarian movement. The LNC repeated its promises "to celebrate solidarity pacts with Labor Organizations to defend our common interests."[50] The LNC's immediate response to Obregón's assassination, including its direct alignment with the Mexican state, the decline of the previously state-allied labor and agrarian organizations, the PCM's minimal and delayed responses to these crises, and the growing divisions within the labor movement all strengthened the LNC. It seemed likely that the LNC would dominate alliances between labor and agrarian organizations.

The Aftermath of the Election and Assassination

The differing ways that the PCM, independent labor organizations, and the agrarian leagues responded to Obregón's reelection and assassination, and the complex crises that followed, made it extremely difficult for them to find common ground. In late 1928 and early 1929, two critical changes began to allow these organizations to overcome some of their divisions. First, the Calles government responded to the main state crises with a series of unifying and empowering solutions. Second, the PCM responded by attempting to use the strategic Global Socialist Offensive, launched by the Comintern at its Sixth World Congress, to lead and unify the independent labor organizations and the agrarian leagues.

Calles's message to Congress on September 1, 1928, presented the Mexican state's main solutions to its many crises. Calles would step down at the end of his term on September 1 as scheduled; Congress would vote on September 25 for the provisional president of its choosing, namely Portes Gil, who would start on December 1; and the presidential elections would be rescheduled for November 1929. These institutional and political solutions allowed state leaders to manage threats from within the military and to further improve its international relations, including with the United States. However, state leaders did not significantly alter their response to the major religious, military, and movements' challenges to state power. These solutions enabled state leaders to manage other challenges from the labor and agrarian movements. Groups formerly allied to the state and independent organizations increasingly associated with the PCM, or directly under the leadership of its members, began to threaten the state. Calles's solutions, which included a new state-sponsored party that would likely survive his government and dominate competition for electoral victory, significantly affected labor and agrarian movements. They hastened the decline of the formerly allied organizations, the CROM and PNA, and promoted the rise, unification, and politicization of other organizations to replace them. The ways that the PCM and these other organizations, above all the agrarian leagues, responded to the state crises and solutions helped determine the ways and extent to which they would unite and divide, though these processes proved extremely fragmented and intricate.

Julio Antonio Mella led the PCM while Rafael Carrillo was at the Comintern's Sixth World Congress. When Carrillo and the rest of the PCM leadership returned to Mexico, the PCM collectively defined direct responses to the state's crises and solutions according to the Global Socialist Offensive. During a plenary meeting of its Central Committee in September 1928, the leadership made several important decisions: to declare its total political independence against the Mexican state and to promote independent, national, and revolutionary alliances between labor and agrarian organizations and movements.[51] As a result, the PCM made declarations of independence against the Mexican state for the rest of the year. On September 22 the PCM published its intention to run independent electoral campaigns and candidates in the next election, while condemning Calles and the Congress's selection of Portes Gil to serve as provisional president.[52] The PCM also denounced the state's proposed national party, which it considered a spurious trap for workers.[53] Returning to its call from previous years for a worker and peasant government, the PCM reinforced the need for a worker and peasant bloc.

Based on the decisions of the Comintern's Sixth World Congress and the Global Socialist Offensive's emphasis on the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Alliance, the PCM advocated for this bloc to secure the political independence and alliance of the labor and agrarian movements.[54] Then, in October, the PCM defined its position on Congress's likely plans for the election of 1929: it would consider all candidates, apart from its own, to belong to the enemy camp.[55] As it had before, the LNC followed the direction of its sponsor, Tejeda. Tejeda condemned Calles's plans for creating a state-allied party—the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR)—and considered running his own independent campaign for the presidency. Tejeda did not ultimately run, but he continued to fund the LNC once it agreed to the PCM's plan to arrange an independent worker and peasant campaign and candidacy.[56] Late in the year, the PCM and LNC jointly announced in *El Machete* that they would hold a convention for "workers and peasants" to designate an independent presidential candidate.[57] Concretely, that meant representatives from both labor and agrarian organizations would decide on a candidate. The convention, scheduled for late January with funds from Tejeda, would finally create the Worker and Peasant Bloc as an electoral organization and nominate a presidential candidate.[58]

The PCM's public decisions to take part in the next presidential election with its own candidate, in representation of labor and agrarian organizations, represented the PCM's most important political responses to the state's crises and solutions in the fall of 1928. The Global Socialist Offensive facilitated the PCM's declaration of independence from the state and its leaders Calles and Portes Gil and its opposition to the creation of the PNR. Instead, by initiating its own plans to form an independent alternative to compete in the election of 1929, the PCM chose to conform to the state's electoral and political framework. It also could not fully break from the economic or political control exerted by the portion of the state represented by Veracruz Governor Tejeda. Because Tejeda also moved toward independence from the PNR, but not against the state itself, Galván and the LNC aligned with the PCM's plans for its electoral alternative. The absence of strong independent labor organizations in these plans and the LNC's greater unity, strength, numbers, and gubernatorial sponsorship meant that the LNC and its agrarian leagues had the most decision-making power and were most likely to compromise the independence of the Worker and Peasant Bloc.

Relationships between the PCM, LNC, and independent labor organizations not only crystallized an electoral bloc, but also solidified into a revolutionary labor confederation, eventually known as the CSUM, that grew out of the September 1928 plenary meeting. There, the PCM made a resolution on union

strategy known only to PCM members, that would allow for the creation of alliances, pacts, and new committees to unite independent labor organizations and the agrarian leagues in new organizations.[59] PCM leaders were extremely split as they defined this union resolution, which underscored serious fissures within the PCM.

In one camp was Mella and Siqueiros, in connection with the Profintern and its organizers in Mexico. They supported the immediate creation of a third revolutionary labor confederation of independent unions, separate from the CROM and CGT. This third confederation would affiliate to the Profintern and send delegates to a revolutionary Latin American labor conference in Montevideo the following year. Mella and his allies had agreed on this resolution in the absence of Carrillo and other PCM leaders.[60] In the rival camp was Carrillo, supported by the PCM's Comintern representative Woog and the majority of the PCM leaders. They opposed the immediate creation of a "third central," seeing it as divisive for the working class and the labor movement.[61] Carrillo instead favored the creation of a committee that would represent all labor and agrarian organizations and their eventual unification into one organization at a national congress to be held at a later date.

While these differences might have seemed slight, they spoke to critical divisions within the international Communist movement. The Comintern, Profintern, and Krestintern disagreed on how to apply significant strategic changes. These international, institutional, and other differences in turn divided the PCM as it sought to unite the labor and agrarian organizations in Mexico. While Woog played the most critical role in defining the Global Socialist Offensive for Mexico, which emphasized the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance, he and his allies in Mexico tended to support the earlier United Front that promoted the greatest possible unity within and between the labor and agrarian movements in Mexico without immediately creating new organizations. This approach conflicted with that of Profintern allies and organizers in Mexico who wanted to immediately end the United Front, thus requiring the immediate creation of new revolutionary organizations. Woog and Carrillo's dominant views defined the PCM's official relations to both the Mexican state and the labor movement for the rest of 1928, but their rivals also strengthened their position which diminished the PCM leadership's power and reinforced divisions that had direct effects on labor and agrarian organizations.

Because of these divisions within the PCM on labor strategy, the weaknesses of both the PCM and independent labor organizations, the strength and involvement of the LNC, and the fraught interactions between the CROM and

the Mexican state after Obregón's assassination, the labor movement as a whole became more divided. The ways that independent labor organizations began to unite with each other and the agrarian leagues under Communist leadership were even more complex. Since the dominant part of the PCM leadership continued to support the United Front and oppose the creation of a third central group in the labor movement, the PCM favored the formation of temporary committees and organizations to unite labor and agrarian organizations for the rest of 1928. However, the PCM kept Siqueiros in charge of its union strategy, and he supported an alternate labor confederation and undermined the rest of the leadership by channeling these temporary committees into a more formal and separation confederation.

The first of these temporary committees, coming directly out of the PCM union resolution of September 18, formed on September 22 as the Comité Pro-Asamblea Nacional Obrera y Campesina (Pro-Worker and Peasant National Assembly Committee, CPANOC).[62] Co-led by Siqueiros and Barrios, with support of the Profintern leader Lozovsky, this committee only operated for a few months in late 1928. It was initially composed of seven organizations: the CTC, representing most of the country's railroad unions; the LNC, representing the agrarian leagues; four independent regional labor confederations from Coahuila, Jalisco, Nayarit, and Tamaulipas, which included mining and oil unions; and the CGT. During the CROM's decline, the CPANOC was the first committee to unite several independent labor organizations and to join them with agrarian organizations, including the most important of them, the CTC and LNC. The CPANOC formed the basis for more formal organizations the following year.

The PCM also founded a second committee in mid-November, the Comité de Defensa Proletaria (Committee for Proletarian Defense, CDP), to "struggle for the creation of a national confederation of autonomous unions."[63] Siqueiros and Barrios also led the CDP, and the Profintern organizer who had just arrived in Mexico, Italian unionist Ennio Gnudi, alias "Orestes," encouraged its organization.[64] The CDP had nine member groups, including most of the organizations in the CPANOC, except for the CGT and CTC, along with regional organizations from Durango, Nuevo León, and Sinaloa, and the railroad league for an industrial union. As its name suggested, the CDP's demands were mostly defensive: to stop company lockouts, layoffs, firings, and wage and hour reductions. Its demands were unique in including agrarian calls for land and for its internationalist perspectives, such as openly favoring organizing for the Latin American labor congress in Montevideo and connecting labor struggles

with anti-imperialism.[65] The CDP allowed any labor organization, including the CROM and CGT, to join without being obligated to change their union affiliation. It was not formally a labor confederation, but in practical terms, it operated as such. The CDP fought for labor demands and quickly set up its own newspaper, *Defensa Proletaria*, to express its views.[66] Barrios meanwhile instructed PCM union organizers to use the CDP to build the industrial infrastructure of a future labor confederation.[67] The CDP led to the creation a third confederation of independent unions and agrarian leagues separate from the CROM and CGT, which eventually refused to cooperate with the CDP.

The PCM, in collaboration with the LNC, used its two labor committees to unite many independent labor organizations in response to conflicts between the CROM and the Mexican state. After the PNA's Díaz Soto y Gama attacked the CROM's Morones and blamed him for Obregón's assassination, and followed soon after by Calles's acceptance of Morones's resignation from his cabinet, rivals of the CROM and Morones accelerated the CROM's demise. Two important venues for the CROM's further break with the state and its decline were the Worker-Employer Convention, held from November 15 to December 8, 1928, and the CROM's Ninth Convention in early December. Portes Gil, first as secretary of governance and then as provisional president, used both conventions and a variety of other means to weaken the CROM and its relations with the state. He also used the state to support independent labor organizations that opposed the CROM.

Portes Gil brought together the Convención Obrero-Patronal (Worker-Employer Convention) in late 1928 to change Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution into a federal labor law.[68] State representatives moderated the convention, which included 75 union delegations and 61 company delegations. By then, there were several federal institutions and powers to manage labor relations, such as the Department of Labor founded in 1911, Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution, the Textile Convention of 1925–27, and the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration that Calles decreed in 1927 to manage the CTC railroad strike. However, there were only labor laws in a few Mexican states, and no federal labor law until 1931. Portes Gil prepared a first draft of such a law at the 1928 convention, which became the basis for the 1931 law. The original version in 1928 would have increased federal control over labor relations and conflicts, including restrictions on unions, strikes, and political activity.

The convention itself was intended to increase state power over the labor movement by diminishing the power of the formerly allied CROM and allowing independent labor organizations to rise at its expense. After Vicente Lombardo

Toledano, the CROM's leading intellectual, methodically discredited each of the articles that promoted state intervention in unions, Siqueiros argued that Portes Gil's code was "inspired by fascist doctrines."[69] Like Lombardo Toledano, Siqueiros opposed the proposal to increase state power to intervene in the internal affairs of unions and strikes and argued for protection of labor rights.

Using the committees created that fall, including the CDP, Siqueiros organized and led 20 delegations of independent labor organizations at the convention in a Bloque Obrero (Worker Bloc, BO).[70] The BO produced a counter-project that included concrete labor demands, including a 44-hour work week with 48-hour pay, Sunday rest, and a minimum wage.[71] Besides preventing unanimity on Portes Gil's project, the BO's creation of its own labor law project facilitated the PCM's unification of many independent labor organizations in the CDP outside of the convention and helped formalize their demands. Once the CROM resigned from the Worker-Employer Convention in early December 1928, the BO remained, allowing the PCM to continue building an independent alternative in the context of an increasingly divided labor movement.

Morones's attacks on Portes Gil and plans to create the PNR during the CROM's Ninth Convention in early December further contributed the CROM's break with the Mexican state. The CROM not only withdrew from the Worker-Employer Convention, but many of its leaders also resigned from positions in Calles's government. The CROM lost Calles's sponsorship, and Calles then announced his retirement from politics. As a result of the drama at its Ninth Convention, the CROM lost even more of its unions. By the end of the year, almost half of its membership was gone. The PCM and the independent labor organizations that had joined the CDP and BO then included the LNC and labor federations in Coahuila, Jalisco, Tamaulipas, and Nayarit. These organizations continued to follow the United Front in response to the CROM's decline.[72] Despite their participation in the Comintern's Sixth World Congress, and their role in developing the Global Socialist Offensive for Mexico, Carrillo and Woog continued to support the earlier United Front.

The PCM sent a delegation at the CROM's Ninth Convention, continued to organize within the CROM, and managed to lead CROM unions in some places, like Xalapa, Veracruz, even though much of the CROM, including its national leadership, did all it could to block Communists from CROM unions. Applying the United Front to the CROM also meant that the PCM still promoted unity between CROM members and independent unions and formally opposed the creation of a separate labor confederation. Regardless, the PCM and its allied labor organizations attacked Morones and the CROM leadership,

but still defended the CROM membership against Mexican state criticism and discouraged them from breaking away to ally with the state or operate on their own.[73] The CDP then proposed a solidarity pact with what remained of the CROM and called for the unity of the labor movement as a whole.[74]

While the CROM lost many members and unions, its affiliates remained strongly anti-Communist and violently opposed PCM members who tried to organize within CROM workplaces and unions. Morones and the CROM leadership therefore rejected any pact between its remaining unions and the PCM-controlled CDP. Once the PCM leadership recognized that the CROM leadership would not allow a solidarity pact or any kind of alliance with the CDP and the independent unions, the PCM submitted to the plans for a separate labor confederation.[75] Gnudi, the Profintern representative, pushed for the confederation's creation, hoping to secure a Mexican organization for the Latin American labor congress scheduled that spring in Uruguay.[76] Woog, the Comintern representative, still opposed a separate confederation, to no avail. The PCM, with the LNC, then set the date to transform the CDP into this third labor confederation, including both independent unions and agrarian leagues, for late January 1929.[77]

The PCM leadership's decision for independence against the Mexican state in September 1928, and the LNC leadership's decision to maintain its relations both with the PCM and with Tejeda as he opposed the plans of other state leaders, set the stage for the series of temporary organizations including the BO, CDP, and CPANOC. On the basis of these decisions, and the formation of ultimately ephemeral groups, the PCM and the LNC agreed to organize and unite independent labor organizations and the agrarian leagues in an independent electoral bloc against the future PNR. More in response to the decline and antagonism of the CROM, as well as the CGT, a fraction of the PCM leadership simultaneously rose to unite the same independent labor organizations and agrarian leagues into an independent or "third" labor confederation. The electoral bloc and the labor confederation grew out of crises that challenged the Mexican state and people's movements. They also grew out of global strategic changes as the Comintern transitioned from the United Front to Socialist Offensive. This meant the Comintern renewed its emphasis on the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance for Mexico, Latin America, and what it considered other colonial and semi-colonial regions.

By the end of 1928, it was clear that divisions within and between global Communist institutions, within the PCM, and within and between the labor and agrarian movements in Mexico would have divisive effects on the new electoral

bloc and confederation. The state-allied parts of both movements were in decline, but the rising independent unions were not very strong. The strategic railroad unions were still suffering from their strike during the previous year. The continuity of relations between the agrarian leagues and their original governing sponsor would likely prevent alliances between these leagues and the independent unions. The growing power of the Mexican state was also likely to further diminish the very limited power, independence, and unity of these vulnerable organizations at the time when they most aligned. Under these unfavorable conditions, the PCM prepared to move them toward revolutionary antagonism against the state in the new year.

CHAPTER 5

Revolutionary Antagonism and Movement Decay

At the end of the first decade after the Mexican Revolution, several organizations of struggle crystallized in a unique series of relationships that changed the qualities of the people's movements by attempting to unite the movements in strategic alliances. These relationships allowed the Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, PCM), still led by Rafael Carrillo, and the Liga Nacional Campesina (National Peasant League, LNC), still led by a PCM member, Úrsulo Galván, to create two organizations at the beginning of 1929: the Bloque Obrero y Campesino Nacional (National Worker and Peasant Bloc, BOCN) and the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México (Unitary Union Confederation of Mexico, CSUM). The BOCN based its name and form on prior recommendations by Communist International (Comintern) and Communist Party statements and decisions. Its purpose was to run an independent electoral campaign for the presidential election of November 1929 against the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR) and its or any other candidate. The BOCN's president was muralist and PCM leader Diego Rivera, and its presidential candidate was an agrarian organizer and revolutionary veteran from Coahuila, Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana. The CSUM was a reorganized version of the Comité de Defensa (Proletaria Proletarian Defense Committee, CDP), founded the previous year. The Communist CSUM organized against the reformist Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM) and the anarchist Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT). The CSUM's mission was to fight for working-class demands against capitalism. Its secretary general was painter and PCM leader David Alfaro Siqueiros, and it memorialized the Cuban international revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella, assassinated earlier in the year, as its honorary leader.

The BOCN and CSUM were both composed of many independent labor organizations and agrarian leagues, and both developed under Communist leadership. The PCM intended for both to serve as its mass organizations for

revolutionary struggle against the Mexican state and capitalism as part of a global struggle against imperialism. However, the LNC, still led by Galván and other PCM members, kept the two organizations from being completely controlled by the PCM. The LNC initially prevented the BOCN and CSUM from attaining full independence from the state and from developing in opposition to the state. The LNC's control over the agrarian leagues enabled it to subordinate the labor organizations that made the BOCN and CSUM possible. The LNC also supported the Mexican state against the PCM and its other associated organizations at critical moments, decisions that proved detrimental to all of them, and attenuated any strength they might have had. None of these organizations was strong enough to coordinate any real power, keep them together in any lasting alliance, or lead any authentic revolutionary struggle, even as they declared alliances and increased their revolutionary antagonism toward the state. The struggles that did occur underscored these limitations.

The Limits of People's Power

The BOCN organized at the National Worker and Peasant Convention, held at the Hispano-Mexicano Court in Mexico City on January 24–25, 1929.[1] This founding convention attracted 320 delegates representing labor and agrarian organizations from throughout the nation.[2] The overwhelming majority were from agrarian leagues in the LNC, which had held its Fourth National Convention a few days earlier. Agrarian leagues accounted for 260, or more than 80%, of all delegates. The other fifty delegates represented local, regional, and industry-based labor organizations and federations, as well as confederations from Coahuila, Durango, Michoacán, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, and Veracruz. The BOCN convention also featured political party delegations: the PCM, the Partido Ferrocarrilero Unitario (Unitary Railroad Worker Party, PFU), and parties from Durango and Veracruz. Many agrarian delegates also attended from Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Mexico State, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, and Tamaulipas. The LNC, which had by then eclipsed the Partido Nacional Agrarista (National Agrarian Party, PNA), had more than 300,000 members at that time. Since the vast majority of BOCN delegates were also LNC members, the BOCN's membership could not have been much higher than 400,000. The first organization in Mexico to deliberately bring together labor organizations and agrarian leagues in one national organization, the BOCN explicitly represented both labor and agrarian demands for a political purpose of national importance: independent participation by people's organizations and

movements in that year's elections. However, several contradictory factors present at its creation reduced its effectiveness and threatened its existence.

The PCM had announced the forthcoming creation of the BOCN in *El Machete* with the claim that "Today the revolution is nothing more than a myth" and that "workers and peasants must seize and raise the banner of revolution . . . against the candidates of the reaction and the bourgeoisie."[3] The potential candidates at that time were Aarón Sáenz, Gilberto Valenzuela, José Vasconcelos, and Antonio I. Villarreal; when the PNR was founded in March, it chose Pascual Ortiz Rubio as its candidate, leaving Vasconcelos as the main rival candidate. The PCM also gave the future BOCN three revolutionary slogans: "All Land to the Peasants!" "All Rights and All Guarantees to the Working Class!" and "All Power to the Workers and Peasants!"

However, the LNC played a stronger role than the PCM in founding, controlling, and moderating the BOCN, ensuring that it would be reformist like the LNC and not revolutionary, like the PCM wanted it to be. The LNC dominated the BOCN founding convention at the expense of both the PCM and the labor organizations. It brought a majority of delegates and members to the BOCN's founding convention and defined much of its structure and purpose at its Fourth Congress, held from January 21 to 23, 1929.[4] The LNC president Úrsulo Galván presided over the convention; held the convention with funds loaned from his patron, Adalberto Tejeda; dominated the writing of the program; and ensured that the presidential candidate, Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana, was an LNC member.[5] Differences between the PCM and LNC and between labor and agrarian organizations, present at the BOCN's foundation, worsened when the PCM later tried to revolutionize the BOCN.

The BOCN's heterogeneous and incoherent program exemplified the organization's contradictory purposes and divided allegiances, revealing the absence of any clear or strong alliance. The BOCN program's twenty-three articles outlined a series of measures for a future worker-peasant government.[6] Instead of defining itself as an independent or revolutionary alternative to the Mexican state, the program defined the BOCN as subject to the abstract conception of sovereignty defined in Article 39 of the Constitution of 1917, which it quoted as an unquestioned source of authority: "National sovereignty resides essentially and originally in the people. All public power arises from the people and is instituted for their benefit. The people have at all times the inalienable right to alter or modify the form of government."[7] The BOCN called for some changes to the state's governing structure to benefit the people, including radical-sounding proposals to abolish the legislature and instead empower labor and agrarian assemblies as

a new form of legislative power. However, these proposals contrasted with calls for moderate judiciary reforms, and made no mention of change to the executive levels, except at the cabinet level, which reduced the possibility that its campaign for the presidency would offer much of an alternative.

The BOCN program made important popular and social demands like the female vote and an end to illiteracy, as well as criminal justice reforms, investment in agricultural and industrial infrastructure for economic development, a progressive income tax, and rent control. It promoted the nationalization of strategic industries and land, separation of church and state, and labor and agrarian reforms, but for the most part did not go beyond requesting application of constitutional guarantees. Although the BOCN was formally independent of the Mexican state, it said almost nothing in its program against the state in economic, social, legal, political, military, religious, or other terms. Instead, it based itself on the state's conceptions of national sovereignty. Although the BOCN was Communist-inspired and used revolutionary rhetoric and the symbol of a red hammer and sickle over an anvil, its political program was not revolutionary.

The BOCN program was nationalist and reformist. It did not critique capitalism or envision socialism. In all of those senses, the BOCN program was more like the LNC's program of 1926 than the PCM's revolutionary perspectives after the Comintern's Sixth Congress of 1928. The BOCN program was a victory for the LNC and a defeat of the PCM and the labor organizations. Later attempts to change the power structure and purpose of the BOCN to favor the PCM and the labor organizations, as well as to promote revolutionary struggle against the Mexican state, only increased divisions already present at its founding. BOCN candidate Rodríguez Triana promised "to awaken the class consciousness of the unorganized workers and peasants and to orient the consciousness and political action necessary to defend the class interests of the organized," but the BOCN's foundational incoherence limited its power and reduced the chances of this awakening of class consciousness.[8]

The CSUM organized at the National Assembly for Worker and Peasant Unification, held from January 26 to 30, 1929, at the Tokyo Salon in Mexico City, a few days after the founding of the BOCN.[9] The CSUM's founding assembly included almost the same exact delegates as the BOCN's founding convention, but delegations represented a higher proportion of labor organizations. The CSUM's comprehensive registry confirmed 397 delegations at the assembly and 102 others that did not attend but joined by mail during the assembly.[10] As in the case of the BOCN, agrarian delegations from the LNC represented more than 300,000 members, and the CSUM's published count claimed 116,000 industrial workers,

raising the CSUM's total claimed membership to 416,000.[11] Delegations arrived from most parts of Mexico, but the largest were from Jalisco, including mining unions, and Tamaulipas and Veracruz, including their oil unions. Besides the LNC, the most important organizations that joined the CSUM were the Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (Confederation of Transportation and Communication Workers, CTC); labor confederations and federations from Coahuila, Durango, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Sinaloa; and local steel and other metalworking unions from Monterrey. Railroad workers in the CTC were the industrial workers with the highest representation, with forty-three delegations for 22,569 members. Workers in electricity, gas works, steel, mining, oil, ports, and telephone and telegraph communication made up another 13,959 members. Altogether, these two groups made up a little over half of the workers represented at the assembly, with 36,528 members. The next largest groups were delegations representing 20,403 workers in baking, brewing, construction, flour milling, soap production, textiles, and urban transportation. Artisans and workers in service trades like garment cleaners, shoemakers, tailors, and janitors had a minority representation of 3,177 members.

Since the CROM and CGT were in decline at this time, and since most union organizations in Mexico then overstated their numbers, it is difficult to accurately assess the overall membership of each organization.[12] For example, while the CROM claimed 1.86 million members in 1927, only 13,000 paid dues. Behind its admitted decline from 2 million in 1928 to 1.5 million in 1930, an early study estimated no more than 100,000–150,000 CROM members in 1928–30, especially given the loss of many of its Mexico City unions by early 1929. At 20,000 members, the CGT was always much smaller than the CROM. The CSUM's founding membership of more than 400,000 should not be overestimated either, especially given that 300,000 were from agrarian leagues, but consideration of its industrial working-class membership alone from its detailed registry suggests that the rising CSUM was larger than the CGT and competed with the declining CROM for representation of the nation's most strategic industrial workers. Comintern representative Edgar Woog was opposed to the CSUM founding and later argued that its original industrial membership was only 40,000, compared to the published 116,000 claimed by Red International of Labor Unions (RILU, or Profintern) representative Ennio Gnudi.[13]

Beyond its variable estimated size, the CSUM was at least as regionally and industrially diverse as the CROM and CGT and was more inclusive of workers in the most strategic national industries: railroads, mining, oil, electricity,

communication, ports, and even steel. Since national industry-wide unions did not yet exist, with the possible exception of the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (Mexican Union of Electrical Workers, SME), which represented Mexico City Light and Power workers, none of the labor confederations in Mexico was truly national or industrial at that time. Given these constraints, the CSUM was the first to begin organizing and unifying unionized workers in the country's most important national industries within one confederation, as well as the first to create an institutional framework for national industrial unionism, the dominant form of labor organization from the next decade on. However, its foundation further subdivided the labor movement. While the CROM and CGT also organized among agricultural workers, the CSUM had a far higher agrarian representation because all LNC members belonged to it. Like the BOCN, the CSUM was unusual in incorporating and combining labor and agrarian organizations and demands. However, its reliance on the agrarian leagues for most of its membership made it subject to politics, goals, and demands of the agrarian movement that were separate and different from concerns of workers, unions, and the labor movement.

The CSUM's purpose was "to defend the interests of workers throughout the Republic against their exploitation by capitalist companies and the bourgeoisie in general."[14] It did not develop its own political program and promised to avoid direct participation in electoral or political campaigns or organizations. The CSUM closely aligned with the BOCN, and PCM members controlled it, which meant that it essentially relinquished important political decisions to these other organizations. It claimed to focus on practical defense of workers in the class struggle against the capitalist offensive, by which it meant fighting for improved wages, hours, working conditions, collective contracts, benefits for unemployed workers, and the demands of women workers.[15] It also took up agrarian demands, which were likely to conflict with those of the LNC.[16]

The CSUM sought to simultaneously organize and take part in national and industry-wide revolutionary strikes and other anti-capitalist struggles, and to build international anti-imperialist solidarity to do so. Its founding assembly's receipt of funds from the US Communist Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), the Comintern-connected International Red Aid, and the Profintern meant internationalist solidarity made the CSUM possible.[17] The CSUM reinforced its international anti-imperialist mission by sending delegates to the Profintern-organized Latin American Labor Congress in Montevideo that May and serving as a founding member of the Confederación Sindical Latino Americana (Latin American Union Confederation, CSLA).[18]

Compared to the BOCN, the CSUM more closely aligned with global strategic emphases and changes that both the Comintern and Profintern promoted after their 1928 congresses, despite the Comintern and Profintern representatives in Mexico disagreeing over the creation of a new union confederation. Profintern representative Ennio Gnudi pressured for its creation, while Comintern representative Edgar Woog opposed it. In addition to these rival international evaluations, different PCM leaders disagreed on whether or not to create the CSUM, leaving it without full Communist support. The assassination of the CSUM's main proponent, the Cuban Julio Antonio Mella, on January 10, 1929, left Mexican union leaders in the PCM like David Alfaro Siqueiros, Elías Barrios, Valentín Campa, and Miguel Ángel Velasco, to organize and sustain the CSUM.

Despite the divisions within PCM leadership and its international representatives, and the death of Mella, the PCM more directly controlled the CSUM than did the BOCN, and it arranged greater power and priority for the labor organizations in relation to the LNC and its agrarian leagues. The subordinate role for the LNC, as well as its direct rejection of politics, meant that state funds and connections did not compromise the CSUM as much as the BOCN. The government of Provisional President Emilio Portes Gil initially considered the CSUM an alternative to the CROM, which allowed it to rise with relative state tolerance. The PCM's greater control of the CSUM, and its more consistently revolutionary, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist language and symbolism, which corresponded more with its structure and purpose, meant this tolerance would not last. Even with its explicitly non-political purpose, the CSUM was more likely to seriously conflict with the state, as well as with the LNC, which supplied most of the BOCN's membership.

Like the BOCN, the CSUM adopted as its symbol a red hammer and sickle superimposed over an anvil, except that it was surrounded by a mechanical gear to represent not only labor-agrarian alliances, but also the domination of industrial workers in those alliances. Still, the CSUM's industrial weakness within a very divided labor movement, dependence on more numerous and state-connected agrarian leagues, and control by a fraction of the PCM leadership severely constrained it. The CSUM could not hold labor and agrarian organizations together in one confederation, effectively struggle for "proletarian defense" against the "capitalist offensive," and sustain practically inevitable attacks from Mexican state forces, much less begin or win a "socialist offensive."[19] Like the CTC and its strike of 1927, the CSUM of 1929 laid much of the groundwork and

infrastructure for the rise of industrial unionism in Mexico in the 1930s, but its original limitations also diminished that later effort.

The creation of the BOCN and CSUM in January 1929 represented the most deliberate attempt at alliances between labor and agrarian organizations, as well as the greatest national unity that they attained in the first decade after the Mexican Revolution. However, the organizations from which they derived were very limited and vulnerable. The BOCN and CSUM both grew out of PCM responses to crises of the Mexican state and the state-allied labor and agrarian organizations, the CROM and PNA, that dominated the labor movement and the agrarian movement, respectively. The BOCN and CSUM also grew out of the International Communist transition from the United Front to the Global Socialist Offensive that promoted the Revolutionary Worker and Peasant Alliance. Both organizations formed through discordant negotiation between the PCM and LNC, which meant that PCM members formally led both the BOCN and CSUM, but that the PCM itself controlled neither. The BOCN and CSUM both included labor organizations and agrarian leagues within their memberships, and addressed labor and agrarian demands in their programs. However, they had different emphases, goals, and purposes, and each had a distinct relationship to the PCM, the LNC, the labor movement, the agrarian movement, and the Mexican state. Both organizations grew out of relationships between strategic parts of the labor and agrarian movements, but because the resulting connections were so limited, they did not form powerful or lasting alliances.

The different organizations that sought to control and represent the labor and agrarian movements each began with significant problems of authenticity and independence. Galván and the LNC's, and therefore also Tejeda's, control over the BOCN, and the BOCN's dedication to maintaining the state's dominant version of national sovereignty, reduced the possibility that it would be a truly independent or autonomous alternative or real antagonist to the Mexican state. A part of the PCM leadership that favored antagonism against the state and its formerly allied organizations, the CROM and PNA, controlled the CSUM. However, the CSUM's decision not to get involved in politics and its dependence on the LNC for most of its membership reduced the chances that the CSUM would serve as a real independent or unifying alternative within the labor movement or against the state.

As the formerly state-allied organizations like the CROM and PNA disintegrated, the LNC solidified its power over the main independent—but by then, very debilitated—labor organizations that sought to replace them. The

CTC remained severely damaged by its earlier railroad strike, and its unemployed members continued to fight for employment and legal resolution of the strike. The PCM remained internally and internationally divided, without the power to fully determine the paths of the various organizations that its members brought together and sought to lead. The crystallization of various different labor and agrarian organizations in a constellation of national connections was therefore fragile and likely to shatter. When state leaders ended their relative tolerance, overwhelming internal and external forces would likely destroy this network of organizations.

Revolutionary Antagonism

Mexican state leaders did not initially deploy serious force against any of these organizations. However, their moves to strengthen the state through the PNR, in preparation since late 1928 and founded in March 1929, proved calamitous for these organizations. Emilio Portes Gil was still provisional president and Plutarco Elías Calles was still powerful, despite his promise to leave politics. From then on, relationships between the state and its earlier allies in the labor and agrarian movements, the CROM and PNA, mattered less. In early 1929, Mexican state leaders focused on the creation of the PNR and the initiation of its electoral campaign for the elections of November 1929. They continued to fight with the Cristeros and prepared for war against discontented ranks in the army. The PCM meanwhile sought to revolutionize itself and the newly created BOCN and CSUM. They increased their denunciations of the state, the Portes Gil provisional government, the forthcoming PNR, and the state's political, military, and religious opponents. The use of revolutionary language and symbolism by the PCM, BOCN, and CSUM, but not the LNC, against the Mexican state and its opponents helped create the conditions for serious divisions between them and the fatal state intervention against them.

The February 16, 1929, edition of *El Machete* most clearly illustrated the Communists' growing revolutionary antagonism toward the Mexican state and its opponents, which closely and inevitably involved the newly created BOCN and CSUM.[20] The cover page featured a reproduction of Diego Rivera's mural *The Arsenal* (1928), which featured Frida Kahlo with a red blouse and red star distributing arms to workers. It also depicted workers and peasants carrying red flags adorned with hammers and sickles, pointing the way to a future socialist revolution. The image was a provocative visual representation of the Communists' move toward revolutionary independence. Below the image was an article on

the PCM's recruitment drive that demanded the armament of workers and the militarization of labor and agrarian organizations. This also signaled increased revolutionary militancy.

That edition's headline, "The Bourgeois Revolution Has Failed," drew from a BOCN manifesto that denounced and satirized all the other potential candidates, especially those likely to win the PNR nomination once it formed later that March.[21] They included the eventual candidate, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Aarón Sáenz, who, though of "humble cradle," was enriched "thanks to the revolution." The BOCN also condemned those it considered other reactionary candidates—Valenzuela, Vasconcelos, and Villarreal—as "bourgeois who have learned to prosper from our struggles in the name of 'redemption'" and to promise a false sense of "justice." The Communists and their associated organizations began to declare revolutionary independence through their criticism of the earlier Mexican Revolution. They criticized the Revolution as a means of personal enrichment for those graced with connections to the resulting post-revolutionary Mexican state. They simultaneously critiqued the state's conservative opponents who had appropriated the language of people's struggles. However, they were not prepared for a real revolutionary struggle against the state or its opponents.

The PCM meanwhile increased attacks on the Mexican state's other main opponents: the Cristeros and conspirators in the military. On February 10, militant Catholic groups used dynamite to damage the presidential train carrying Portes Gil and his family in response to the execution of Obregón's assassin, José de León Toral, the day before. In response to this latest Catholic assassination attempt, the PCM insulted the regular army and called for worker and peasant armament, presumably from the BOCN and other allied organizations led by its members, to fight "the Cristero and landlord rebellion" and "the reaction."[22] As in previous years, the PCM's official statements most strongly condemned the state's main enemies, but its condemnations of the state with intense revolutionary language and symbolism suggested revolutionary political and military aspirations beyond its earlier manifestos and the BOCN's moderate electoral program. As state leaders planned the PNR, and as their opponents within the military prepared for rebellion, this revolutionary language and symbolism increased the chances of state attacks on the PCM and the newly created BOCN and CSUM. Statements and images like those published in *El Machete* in February were also likely to increase discord within the PCM over its relations with the state, as well as with Galván and the LNC. The long-awaited military rebellion generated the most discordant struggles within and between the recently created organizations and prepared the way for state intervention against them.

Road to Ruin

The PNR's founding convention, held in Querétaro on March 1–4, 1929, formally created the new party and launched its first presidential campaign for Pascual Ortiz Rubio.[23] The long-awaited rebellion, the Escobar Rebellion, began on March 3 when rebels released their Plan de Hermosillo, Sonora, against Provisional President Portes Gil, former president Calles, the PNR, and its soon-to-be announced presidential candidate.[24] Although the rebellion started in Veracruz under General Jesús M. Aguirre, it was primarily a northern revolt. General José Gonzalo Escobar, Chief of Military Operations of Coahuila, led the national rebellion from his headquarters in Torreón and gave the revolt its name. In Sonora, both Governor Fausto Topete and General Francisco R. Manzo joined the rebellion and won support from presidential candidate Gilberto Valenzuela. In Chihuahua, Governor Marcelo Caraveo rebelled, as did Generals Juan Gualberto Amaya and Francisco Urbalejo, the governor and military commander in Durango, respectively. The uprising in Sonora tried to discredit Calles, its former governor, and the rising in Coahuila was an attack on Governor and then PNR president Manuel Pérez Treviño, not to mention on the BOCN candidate Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana, also from Coahuila. The revolt in Veracruz against Governor Adalberto Tejeda meanwhile signaled conservative opposition to reformism even in a state independent of the PNR where the BOCN was strongest.

The Escobar Rebellion began with support from a third of the army and attained control of ten major Mexican states, mostly in the north: Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, Jalisco, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Zacatecas. It threatened to connect with the Cristero Rebellion in the west and allowed the Cristeros to launch their most serious guerrilla offensive. The Escobar Rebellion also threatened to take over Mexico City in early March. However, the Mexican state retained two-thirds of loyal forces in the army and the support of the US government. Portes Gil immediately placed Calles in charge of the Secretariat of War, replacing the recently injured General Joaquín Amaro, to defeat the rebellion. The Mexican state put down the Escobar Rebellion by May 1929. As they did during previous military rebellions, Mexican state leaders sought the support of labor and agrarian organizations and armed them to fight the Escobar Rebellion. Realignments within the labor and agrarian movements, including the decline of the CROM and PNA as state allies, and differences between the BOCN, CSUM, LNC, and PCM on whether to antagonize or ally with the state, changed the way state leaders fought this rebellion and how different parts of these movements responded.

The Escobar Rebellion created tremendous problems for the PCM, the LNC, and the new BOCN and CSUM. These organizations all initially opposed the rebellion, but their different responses turned into serious disagreements. Diego Rivera signed the first of these responses, in the name of the BOCN, dated the day after the rebellion began. The BOCN simply wrote: "The Bloque Obrero y Campesino Nacional considers the military uprisings in Sonora and Veracruz as the beginning of a frankly reactionary movement; in consequence, we are disposed to combat them in every terrain in the name of our program."[25] The PFU railroad party seconded the BOCN response.[26] The LNC response that same day was more extensive and concrete.[27] Considering the rebellion a counterrevolutionary action, the LNC claimed its revolutionary mission was to fight the rebellion. It called on its agrarian leagues to militarize and combat the rebellion with armed force, and it assured the president of military support. Following its earlier decision not to engage in politics, the CSUM under David Alfaro Siqueiros did not publish any statement on the rebellion and only alluded to it in an article weeks later.[28]

As in previous moments of crisis, the PCM provided the most comprehensive, but also the most divisive, analysis and response in a manifesto dated March 5.[29] The PCM manifesto, published in *El Machete*, considered the "reactionary" military rebellion a greater danger than the Mexican state. At the same time, similar to its earlier statements, the PCM criticized the state for claiming to derive from "the so-called Mexican Revolution."[30] In the first of its seven points, it promised to defend the state against the military rebels: "Demand from the federal executive power and all local powers for the immediate delivery of all available arms and war matériel to the labor and agrarian organizations that, together with federal forces loyal to the government, must guarantee the defense of the regions and cities attacked by reactionary troops." The remaining points included demands for worker control over industries and increased land distribution. The manifesto caused confusion among the Communist-led organizations and Mexican state leaders because the PCM reversed its previous belligerence toward the state and did not explain, at least not in public, what to do with the arms after the rebellion. Nor did it explain whether it intended to use arms to fight for demands independently of the state or against the state.

On the Question of Revolution

It is not clear whether the PCM planned or acted to begin a revolution against the state during the Escobar Rebellion.[31] Since most historical analyses have

questioned the reliability of later accounts by participants and have not closely examined many of the most relevant primary sources for this purpose, the following only considers sources from the Comintern's archive on Mexico and the PCM to gain clarity on this controversial question. These sources allow for unique insights on this controversy, and are qualitatively different from each other in form, content, timing, origin, and purpose; sometimes they explicitly contradict each other. Some contain information that other sources may not confirm, or only partially do. The following analysis is therefore careful to discern what was likely and what was not, and to present the evidence as accurately as possible for a more complete interpretation.

A close examination of these sources reveals that what mattered most is not whether or not the PCM planned or attempted to initiate a revolution against the state during the rebellion. More importantly, the sources reveal the difficulties that Communists and the labor and agrarian organizations that they led—as well as international representatives to them—had in developing a revolutionary strategy or practice at the end of the decade after the Mexican Revolution. Going beyond public declarations about how and why labor and agrarian organizations continued to respond to national state crises, they shed light on attempted alliances in response to a military rebellion. The conflicting information and contradictory interpretations in the sources illustrate why alliances between labor and agrarian organizations did not last under the strain of war and why their responses proved so divisive.

The first relevant source was a report dated March 23, 1929: twenty days after the beginning of the Escobar Rebellion.[32] It did not include a name or location and was marked "Secret" on its first page. An unattributed note dated March 29 accompanied the report and identified its author as "Banderas," a pseudonym of Stanislav Pestkovsky.[33] The note indicated that a discussion of the report would occur on the morning of April 1 in the office of the International Peasant Council (Krestintern) in Moscow. Pestkovsky, who was the Soviet ambassador to Mexico in 1924–26 and who had competed with Edgar Woog for influence over the PCM and Comintern strategy in Mexico, apparently continued to seek influence over the PCM through the Krestintern after his return to the Soviet Union. The Krestintern had formal power over its member organization in Mexico, the LNC, but not the PCM. The March 1929 report did not mention the Krestintern, but it likely reflected the Krestintern's purposes, not just Pestkovsky's. The author of the report addressed it to the LNC, and it outlined a series of tasks that the LNC and BOCN should carry out in response to the Escobar Rebellion.

The report, composed of eleven theses, criticized the LNC and BOCN for their public decisions to fight the rebels in alliance with the Mexican state, without simultaneously emphasizing their independence from the state or upholding their demands.[34] According to the eighth thesis, "It is necessary to remember that immediately after the victory over the counterrevolutionary rebellion, it is possible to consider the necessity of an armed struggle against the government," in case the state turned against these organizations after the rebellion.[35] If that were to happen, "The Liga [LNC] and the Bloque [BOCN] must take advantage of all possibilities to achieve the complete armament of the worker and peasant masses." The tenth thesis summarized the tasks: "In a word, it is necessary to take advantage of the civil war, by all means, for the creation of a powerful and centralized armed worker and peasant organization, under the leadership of the Bloque Obrero y Campesino [BOCN], capable of bringing the masses of workers toward a decisive struggle against imperialism, landlords, the bourgeoisie, and its allies."[36]

The report carefully avoided mention of the PCM, but a letter to the PCM, without name, date, or location, though likely also by Pestkovsky, written around the same time accompanied the report.[37] This letter indicated that the report should serve as the basis for the PCM's relations with the agrarian leagues and the LNC leadership. It criticized the PCM for its inability to lead or control the LNC, demanded that the PCM finally break with the LNC's leader Úrsulo Galván, and envisioned a PCM-led LNC without Galván. It further condemned the PCM for allowing Galván to control the LNC and the BOCN in alliance with Veracruz Governor Adalberto Tejeda, which resulted in the BOCN's "opportunist" program, its selection of an unreliable presidential candidate, Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana, and the BOCN's overall weakness when confronted with the military rebellion. The letter then predicted that the Mexican state would soon begin persecution of the PCM and its allied organizations. It made no mention of the arming of labor or agrarian organizations, the creation of a revolutionary armed force, or revolutionary armed struggle against the state, but it explicitly referred the PCM to the report that did.

Although the report called for the creation of an armed labor and agrarian organization during the rebellion, crucially, it did not call for the deployment of revolutionary armed force against the Mexican state during the rebellion. It envisioned the future possibility of such an armed struggle, but only after the military rebellion against it was over. It is unclear if or when the PCM or LNC received the report or the letter. It is possible that the leaders of both organizations received both documents or were at least aware of their contents then or

soon after, in late March or early April. If so, this would help explain the later responses and actions of these leaders and their organizations.

Another relevant source was an informal letter sent by Edgar Woog in Mexico City to Manuel Díaz Ramírez in Moscow, dated April 2, 1929.[38] Woog's stated purpose was to inform Díaz Ramírez of the situation in Mexico, apparently after Díaz Ramírez solicited this information on March 5.[39] This letter was part of the voluminous international correspondence between Woog and the early PCM leaders, including with his ally Díaz Ramírez, PCM secretary general in 1921–24. The fact that Woog was in Mexico during the Escobar Rebellion meant that he had immediate access to intelligence on events as they were occurring, both from within the PCM and in relation to the Comintern. His letter offered critical insights into how the PCM responded to the rebellion, in contrast to those of his rival Pestkovsky, whose writings offered equally critical insights into how he and the Krestintern sought to influence the PCM, LNC, and BOCN from afar and tried to advise them on how to respond to the rebellion. Woog apparently did not have access to Pestkovsky's March 23 report to the LNC when he wrote this letter, which signals the possible absence of communication between two international representatives on similar, critical matters.

In Woog's April 2 letter to Díaz Ramírez, he criticized the PCM leadership for what he considered its deficiencies, not its overall in response to the rebellion, but for the weaknesses of its secretary general, Rafael Carrillo, and for passing resolutions that it did not implement.[40] Woog also condemned individual PCM leaders for their conduct during the rebellion, naming the Italian Vittorio Vidali, identified in the letter by abbreviations of his aliases, "Carlos Contreras" and "Enea Sormenti." On March 18, Vidali was thought to have supported "an immediate armed insurrection," but Woog reported that by the time of his letter, Vidali had changed his position.[41] According to Woog, Vidali by then opposed any independent revolutionary rising and instead claimed that the only task was to organize and strengthen the PCM. Woog also claimed that David Alfaro Siqueiros, leader of the CSUM, supported Vidali's latter position against any rising.

Though he represented the Comintern, Woog denigrated it for its constant criticisms of the PCM and for not providing necessary economic resources. He claimed, "I frankly do not know what the Comintern wants. I believe that to make the revolution, it is necessary to have the masses."[42] Woog then argued that since the Comintern did not provide the PCM with necessary resources for revolution, it bolstered those who claimed that, "because of the international policy of Moscow toward the United States, the Comintern is not interested in having a revolution in Mexico." Woog's view was that Mexico's worsening economic

conditions, the country's increasing political disorganization during the military rebellion, and conflicts over the next elections would lead to acute labor and agrarian struggles after the rebellion. He argued that Communists needed to organize and prepare, "with the perspective that in the immediate future, which could be at the end of this year [1929] or the beginning of the next [1930], we will have to guide the masses toward an armed movement in our favor."

This was only his prediction and recommendation, but it suggested that, while some in the PCM leadership had previously supported an immediate revolution, no real consideration of or preparation for revolution had happened during the Escobar Rebellion or would be possible until later, after it was over. Woog's own apparent lack of awareness of the Comintern's goals in Mexico also suggested the absence of any clear international revolutionary or other strategy for the PCM, as did his speculation that the policy of the Soviet Union toward the United States prevented the Comintern from supporting revolution in Mexico. In 1929, the USSR and US did not have diplomatic relations, but Mexico maintained formal relations with both.[43] Woog may have been suggesting that the Soviet Union did not want the Comintern's actions in Mexico to worsen Soviet relations with United States. Such comments clearly indicated the importance of international stakes involved in Mexican Communist decision-making and of internal rifts over how to respond to the Escobar Rebellion; specifically, that international factors helped prevent any resolute decision or action for revolution during the rebellion. Woog's letter suggested that PCM leadership divided during the rebellion, with some briefly favoring revolution, leading the PCM to make no overall decision for revolution during the rebellion.

Two later sources by the PCM provided crucial interpretations of its actions that should be considered in relation to the documents by Pestkovsky and Woog. One was a summary report of the PCM's activities from July 1928 to April 1929, probably written between late April and early May 1929.[44] In its paragraph on the PCM's activities in March 1929, the first month of the Escobar Rebellion, the report claimed that "A minority of members of the Central Committee" favored "taking advantage of the counterrevolutionary uprising to convert it into an armed uprising of the Party for the conquest of power."[45] According to this report, "A majority of the Central Committee" opposed this view, and "gave the necessary instructions to combat the counterrevolutionary uprising, while maintaining the independent action of the armed guerrillas of workers and peasants under the influence of the Party, without forgetting to struggle against the government and its policy of alliance with the bourgeoisie and submission to imperialism." This source partly corroborated Woog's portrayal in his April letter

of differences within the PCM leadership over how to respond to the rebellion, which it claimed included a faction in favor of an independent uprising. Both documents suggest an internally divided PCM leadership, a view that could not be surmised from its published statements. This report did not claim that the majority favored armed struggle against the state during the rebellion, but it did claim that the majority favored armed action independent of the state. The contradictory interpretations written after the rebellion ended also did not claim that the leadership favored armed action against the state, but instead focused on whether or not the leadership favored armed action independent of the state.

A much more important, but qualitatively different, source by the PCM was the series of resolutions that its Central Committee adopted at its plenary meeting in July 1929.[46] At this meeting, the PCM leadership made a major political and ideological change in preparation for what it considered an imminent revolution as part of the Comintern's decision to intensify its Global Socialist Offensive. While doing so, the PCM explicitly criticized its own earlier responses to the Escobar Rebellion. This self-criticism resulted in the first major source written after the end of the rebellion, and it complicated all later interpretations of events in the spring. Apparently authored by the Soviet Comintern agent Mikhail Grollman, alias "Oswald" and "Pedro," the July plenary resolutions detailed many far-reaching decisions and devastating critiques of the PCM leadership. While the plenary meeting took place in Mexico, PCM leaders apparently only had limited access to the original resolutions. A complete edition was published abroad months later, but here, only the document's interpretation of the PCM leadership's conduct during the Escobar Rebellion will be considered. As a polemic designed to justify specific ideological and political decisions, its goal was not necessarily to provide an accurate historical interpretation.

Like the summary report of the PCM's activities from late April–early May, the July resolutions identified a majority position of the PCM leadership, but it associated this official position with the PCM manifesto of March 5, which pledged to aid the Mexican state against the military rebels.[47] The July resolutions, in contrast to the previous report, did not mention anything about independent action of PCM-led forces. Instead, they condemned the PCM leadership's majority for only supporting the state against the rebels, rather than also calling for struggle independent of the state during the rebellion. Similar to Woog's April letter and the spring PCM report, the July resolutions also identified a minority of the PCM leadership that favored an "immediate insurrection."[48] The report claimed that this position emerged fifteen days after the beginning of the rebellion and had not been presented in any document, but this

is exactly the same timing that Woog referenced. The resolutions criticized this position for avoiding mention of struggle against the rebels, and because labor and agrarian organizations were not organized or prepared for an insurrection. The resolutions also referred to a "neutral" point of view held by some in the PCM leadership and associated this view with the CSUM, which it criticized for refusing to fight against the rebels and thereby relinquishing influence over labor and agrarian organizations to the state and its allies during the rebellion.[49] This also partly aligned with Woog's April 2 letter, which claimed that the CSUM's Siqueiros took a similar position after Vidali renounced support for immediate insurrection. The July resolutions confirmed the kinds of differences and divisions within the PCM leadership that other sources written during the Escobar Rebellion referenced, including an insurrectionary faction. The main difference was that the July resolutions criticized all of the PCM leadership's different positions, including the majority.

The final source relevant for this analysis was a report that Woog wrote under his pseudonym, "Stirner," for the Comintern, in Moscow, dated September 15, 1929.[50] This report was the most detailed and extensive source on what happened in the spring and the responses of the PCM and its allied organizations to the Escobar Rebellion. However, Woog wrote it months after the rebellion was over, and after the PCM leadership had made its substantial ideological and political change, in which it had criticized its previous conduct during the rebellion. While Woog's report contained more information and documentation than any other source, it also contained material that is difficult or impossible to verify. It is also unclear whether anyone in Mexico or in the PCM read it at the time or was even aware of its existence or contents.

Woog claimed that, in February 1929, the PCM leadership divided in two over how to respond to any future military rebellion.[51] He contended that the PCM leadership's majority argued that a future rebellion was possible but not inevitable and, in any case, was not an immediate danger. He took this argument to mean that the PCM's main work was to organize and strengthen the newly created BOCN and CSUM rather than to prepare for any outbreak of rebellion. Woog claimed the minority argued that a future rebellion was a real and immediate danger and that all of the PCM's work should focus "on preparing mass organizations for their independent leadership and intervention in the rebellion, and during the civil war, to install a worker and peasant government." In his view, this minority position gained influence over the PCM leadership later in the month. Its proponents had attended the PCM conference in Veracruz on February 16–17 and had prepared its delegates with instructions on how to

respond to what they considered an inevitable rebellion, but they faced opposition from the Veracruz agrarian leaders who were still members of the PCM. Woog also wrote that the PCM leadership's minority convinced the leadership as a whole to pass a resolution on February 27 to prepare for the outbreak of rebellion, but that the majority did not implement the decision.

While the PCM leadership was not ready to respond when the Escobar Rebellion began on March 3, Woog reported, it soon defined "the situation as becoming immediately revolutionary" and decided "to prepare workers and peasants for an open struggle against the government and the existing system."[52] According to Woog, the PCM Central Committee created a special commission of three members to implement the decisions of the PCM leadership. Woog wrote that on March 4, this three-person special commission sent seven members to various regions to carry out its instructions.[53] Woog claimed that the main instructions, which he listed by letters, were that the Communists would (A) "Secure the armament of workers and peasants by claiming arms from the government and by appropriating them by force." They would then, (B) support "the formation of guerrillas and worker and peasant defense corps," under the leadership of labor unions and agrarian leagues, with their own military leaders. The most important instruction was (C) "in the first stage, struggle with government troops against the insurgents [Escobar rebels] and Catholic bands [Cristeros], while carrying out agitation among the government troops against the existing regime, and in favor of a real worker and peasant government." Then, "in the second stage, struggle for the formation of councils of soldiers, the dismissal of generals and officers, fusion of revolutionary troops with the formations of workers and peasants, and the creation of a revolutionary worker and peasant army."

Woog wrote that after the state defeated the military rebels in Veracruz, with the aid of the PCM's agrarian leaders there, the PCM leadership divided into three groups, practically the same as those identified in the PCM's July resolutions.[54] One group opposed any "armed independent actions," the second favored "immediate insurrection," and the third favored, in alignment with the instructions the PCM leadership had defined at the outset of the rebellion, "organizational and ideological preparation of workers and peasants for independent armed action, all to reinforce criticism and attacks against the government, and petit-bourgeois politicians."[55] Woog condemned the first two groups and defended the third group, which he claimed won over the majority of the PCM leadership. Woog wrote that this group influenced the publication of an article in *El Machete* on March 23, which called for direct land seizures, rather than any general revolutionary uprising, and which Úrsulo Galván opposed in a message to the LNC on the same day.[56]

It is difficult to tell whether this all happened in the ways that Woog outlined. Most critically, it is unclear whether the PCM leadership decided or acted early during the rebellion to organize independent labor and agrarian military forces, including for "agitation among the government troops against the existing regime," and for the later "creation of a revolutionary worker and peasant army."[57] If such instructions did exist, it is possible that the leadership, or the commission that he claimed it created, did not implement them, or did not do so fully, or that the actual course of the rebellion prevented their implementation. The PCM's July plenary meeting and resolutions may have influenced Woog's writing on this matter. He had participated in the meeting, and when he wrote about it in his September report, he claimed that he had not received all of the resolutions.[58] It is possible that Woog wrote that the PCM leadership decided and acted early during the rebellion to establish labor and agrarian military forces that were to operate independently of the state in order to defend the PCM leadership against the July plenary resolutions that criticized it for not doing so. In any case, in September, Woog did not claim that the PCM leadership, in these instructions or otherwise, had called for the deployment of armed revolutionary force against the state to occur during the rebellion.[59] Pestkovsky's report from late March and Woog's letter from early April also made no mention of the deployment of armed revolutionary force against the state during the rebellion.[60] While the authors of both sources envisioned the future possibility of revolutionary armed struggle against the state, they agreed that this could only occur after the rebellion.

Regarding Woog's claim in his September report that the PCM leadership divided in three later during the rebellion, most of the previous sources suggested or claimed a similar division.[61] It is probable that this, or a similar division occurred at some time during the rebellion, and that a faction briefly favored an immediate revolutionary uprising, but that the majority of the PCM leadership did not. However, it is not clear what the actual position of the majority was after such a division. It is possible that the majority of the PCM leadership only followed its public manifesto on March 5, to support the state against the rebels, as the July resolutions criticized. It is also possible that, once the PCM leadership divided, the majority favored preparation for independent armed action just as the leadership had at the beginning of the rebellion, per Woog's September report.

Considering all of these sources on how the PCM responded to the Escobar Rebellion, it is likely that the PCM leadership as a whole did not have a strategy for revolution nor did they take revolutionary action against the state during the rebellion. It is also likely that the PCM leadership divided in response to the

rebellion, with some in the PCM leadership supporting an armed revolutionary insurrection during the rebellion but then changing their position. International factors appeared to have reduced the chances of any decisive response to the rebellion. These factors included the differing roles, locations, timing, and purposes of international representatives and the probability that international institutions did not provide a clear strategy, for revolution or otherwise, or necessary resources.

What mattered most was that the tortuous course of the rebellion further fractured the PCM and the organizations that its members led and contributed to their downfall. These organizations apparently did not have or develop a clear, consistent, or unified strategy of any kind during the Escobar Rebellion, whether to eventually create a revolutionary labor and agrarian armed force or to begin a revolution against the Mexican state. Instead, the rebellion exposed cracks and exacerbated differences between the organizations over their relations with the state and the question of revolution. The LNC strengthened its alliance with the Mexican state in warfare against the military rebellion. The PCM and the other organizations under its influence increased their antagonistic revolutionary statements against the state, but they did not necessarily increase their revolutionary actions. As they entangled themselves in a deadly military conflict, they became vulnerable to violent assaults by both the state and its armed opponents during the rebellion. This subjected all of them to fatal state interventions after the rebellion.

Fatal Struggles

As during previous military conspiracies and rebellions against the Mexican state that took place in Veracruz, such as the de la Huerta Rebellion, the Portes Gil provisional government armed the Liga de Comunidades Agrarias del Estado de Veracruz (League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Veracruz, LCAEV), still led by PCM members, for aid and defense during the Escobar Rebellion.[62] General Aguirre and his rebels immediately occupied Xalapa, the capital of Veracruz, along with the port city of Veracruz, but mistakenly invited Epigmenio Guzmán, LCAEV president and municipal president of Villa Cardel, to join the rebellion. Guzmán claimed alliance with Aguirre but instead informed Galván of rebel plans. Galván then notified Governor Tejeda, giving him time to escape the port before the rebellion. Guzmán meanwhile raised loyal troops to fight the rebels and forced Aguirre out of the port. Galván and other

LCAEV leaders like Sóstenes Blanco, Antonio Carlón, and Antonio Echegaray meanwhile fought rebels in other parts of Veracruz.

After LCAEV forces defeated the rebels for control of the port of Veracruz on March 6, they entered the city on horseback and began their occupation by raising rifles and red flags with embroidered hammers, sickles, and stars. Despite this revolutionary symbolism, the LCAEV subordinated its troops to Governor Tejeda, who joined with the Xalapa police chief, General Manuel Jasso; the head of the Veracruz militia, General Lindoro Hernández; and the commander sent by the federal government, General Miguel M. Acosta, to defeat the rest of the rebels. Tejeda's forces then joined with allied agrarian forces and led the final campaign against Aguirre into Huatusco, where Galván commanded his forces. They captured Aguirre on March 20 and summarily executed him the next day. The agrarian troops in Veracruz again played an indispensable role in defending the Mexican state against military rebels. Communists led the troops, but more in alliance with Tejeda than with the Communist Party.

The LCAEV's successful role in defense of the Mexican state against the rebels strained the relationships within and between the PCM the other organizations its members led, including those that the LCAEV belonged to: the BOCN, CSUM, and LNC. After the defeat of the rebellion in Veracruz, these relationships began to break apart. Perhaps because the PCM was unable to guide the agrarian troops in Veracruz either independently of the Mexican state or against the state, and because the agrarian troops decided to subordinate themselves to the state, the PCM leadership began to antagonize Galván, the LNC, and the LCAEV. In a late March *El Machete* article, the PCM increased attacks on the Mexican state and appealed to the armed agrarian leagues led by its members to directly take land with their own hands.[63] Finally adopting a fully independent agrarian strategy after many years of debate, the PCM totally rejected Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917, which provided for the Mexican state's agrarian reform and the ejido. The PCM then called for "campesinos" to carry out direct land seizures. By campesinos, the PCM presumably meant members of agrarian communities organized in the agrarian leagues.

International interventions, such as the Krestintern directions summarized by Stanislav Pestkovsky, might have influenced or provoked these statements by the PCM.[64] Whether or not PCM or LNC leaders were immediately aware of these deliberations, the PCM's public statements forced the LNC's agrarian leagues to choose between aiding the Mexican state with armed force against the rebels or siding with the PCM on land seizures.

Also on March 23, Galván and the LNC leadership published a manifesto that revealed the LNC had offered the Portes Gil regime unconditional political and military support from the beginning of the Escobar Rebellion.[65] With the rebellion coming to an end, the LNC asserted full support for the Mexican state and the Portes Gil government. The LNC did so by announcing the suspension of all political activities until the rebellion was over. This manifesto meant that the LNC chose the state over the PCM and began to withdraw from its relations that sustained the BOCN and CSUM. The exchanges of March 23 marked the first major fracture in the fragile constellation of connected organizations. While differing responses to the Escobar Rebellion in Veracruz significantly divided these organizations, even more divergent responses to the rebellion in the north and events in and around Mexico City led to the most definitive breakdown in their alliance.

As the Escobar Rebellion continued in the north, the PCM returned to revolutionary, bellicose proclamations against the Mexican state, echoed by the still-allied BOCN and CSUM, which set the stage for violent state intervention. The PCM began to associate its moves toward revolutionary independence against the post-revolutionary Mexican state with the most revolutionary struggles of the Mexican Revolution, especially those of Emiliano Zapata and his revolution in the southern state of Morelos. This was made clear in the *El Machete* issue of early April 1929, that introduced more revolutionary agrarian statements, the slogan "All Land, Not Scraps of Land! – Said Zapata," a woodcut of Zapata on horseback, and an interview with the BOCN candidate Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana on the Zapatistas.[66] In this and other interviews and statements, Rodríguez Triana used his own experiences during the Mexican Revolution to support the Communists' revolutionary transition.[67] Rodríguez Triana was a veteran of many rival revolutionary movements during the Revolution, including Zapata's Ejército Libertador del Sur (Liberating Army of the South, ELS).[68] On the tenth anniversary of Zapata's assassination, he argued that the BOCN should draw "Lessons from the Revolution of the South," including its formation of "an authentic people's army," this time "for the union between peasants and workers" to achieve "the complete triumph of the working class."[69] Rodríguez Triana's campaign reached its height that April at a mass rally and festival in Tizayuca, Hidalgo, where both he and Diego Rivera spoke before crowds of thousands from Central Mexico.[70]

In late spring 1929, empowered by its creation of the PNR and victories over the Escobar Rebellion, Mexican state leaders still could not defeat the Cristeros. They were strong enough, however, to initiate a successful wave of repression against the much weaker PCM and the labor and agrarian organizations under

its influence. Violent state force against these organizations began on May Day, the holiday on which the PCM, BOCN, CSUM, and other organizations held a march and rally in Mexico City, in commemoration of the 1886 Chicago workers' demonstration and massacre. They called their event "The Day Against the Reaction" and used increasingly revolutionary language against the state.[71] Their manifestos hailed the revolutionary workers of Mexico; called for the overthrow of the national bourgeoisie, imperialism, and the reaction; and proclaimed "Long Live the Proletarian Revolution!"[72] Thousands marched with huge red flags and banners emblazoned with revolutionary slogans like "All Land to the Peasants!" "All Factories for the Workers!" and "All power to the Working Class!"[73] The march centered on the Mexico City Zócalo, with protests held at the National Presidential Palace. At the head of the march were the soon-to-be-married couple Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, captured in an image by the photographer who introduced them, Tina Modotti.

At midday, allegedly in response to a request by the US Consulate after verbal insults to Ambassador Dwight W. Morrow and his staff, Mexican security forces arrived to stop speeches by PCM Secretary General Rafael Carrillo. Police armed with handguns and rifles joined with firefighters armed with axes, hammers, and steel bars to break up the protest. As in the state repression of the Mexico City march in preparation for the CTC strike in 1927, the demonstrators on May Day 1929 could not compete with the police. Hernán Laborde, veteran of the CTC strike, attended this protest as a BOCN organizer and PFU congressional representative, and was beat to the ground with rifle stock by security forces. As police and firefighters trampled and bloodied protestors, officers arrested Carrillo, members of the Communist Youth, and the CSUM. Mexican state repression of the May Day march and rally in Mexico City triggered a wave of state terror that forced most Communist and Communist-associated organizations underground by the summer.

The Mexican state's single most violent and divisive act of terror against these organizations was the execution in Durango of the PCM leader, LNC National Treasurer, and BOCN organizer José Guadalupe Rodríguez two weeks later. The differing ways that the PCM and LNC responded to the extralegal execution of one of their common leaders further destabilized all of these organizations and their relationships. This tragedy originated in the wars between state forces and the Escobar and Cristero Rebellions, and the growing opposition by state leaders against the Communists and their allied organizations.

After the defeat of the rebellion in Veracruz, Secretary of War Plutarco Elías Calles focused on defeating the rebellion in the north, specifically in Durango

and in neighboring Torreón, Coahuila, where General José Gonzalo Escobar led rebel operations.[74] As in Veracruz, PCM members in Durango, under the command of José Guadalupe Rodríguez, led armed, LNC-affiliated agrarian troops against the Escobar Rebellion. With the aid of Rodríguez's forces, Mexican military forces defeated the rebel forces of Durango Governor General Juan Gualberto Amaya and Chief of Military Operations General Francisco Urbalejo.[75] On March 19, federal forces under Calles placed the few remaining federal troops in Durango under the command of General Manuel Medinaveytia.[76] The federal congress dissolved the Durango legislature and, on the recommendation of Provisional President Emilio Portes Gil, designated lawyer, politician, and local agrarian leader Alberto Terrones Benítez as provisional governor of Durango.

After suppressing the Escobar Rebellion, Terrones Benítez and Medinaveytia set out to defeat the Cristeros in their territory.[77] Despite their disagreements over reliance on agrarian auxiliary troops, they both opposed Rodríguez and so sent him and his troops on a siege against the Cristeros in the Mezquital forest and canyon. On the accusation that Rodríguez's troops had defied his command during this campaign against the Cristeros and requisitioned livestock and foodstuffs, Terrones Benítez ordered the imprisonment of Rodríguez and two of his allies on April 10.[78] Federal forces seized their arms, ammunition, cavalry, and livestock and charged more than one hundred of their troops with insubordination and theft.

Portes Gil supported Terrones Benítez's decision by declaring that the imprisoned had committed criminal acts and illegal agitation.[79] Despite allegations that the accused had stamped requisitioned livestock with hammers and sickles, a court investigation found that former military rebels had branded the animals with their symbols. The state prosecuting attorney appointed by the governor went against the state's side of the case when he argued that the accused had not stolen the livestock and the judge in the case released Rodríguez and the other prisoners on April 26.[80] Days before, the PCM had ordered agrarian forces that its members led not to disarm after the rebellion; the April 20 edition of *El Machete*, for instance, urged readers "to not return a single rifle or cartridge."[81] On April 29, days after his release and apparently aware of this Communist order, Rodríguez denounced both the Mexican state and its religious opponents with revolutionary language and symbolism, but made no mention of an uprising against the state.[82]

Terrones Benítez declared that he did not allow this language and symbolism in Durango under his governorship. He instead pledged the "repression of

all disorderly and disorienting movements," specifically of the Communists and Cristeros, whom he claimed represented "projects of extermination" that endangered the Mexican state and "provoked grave conflicts in the country."[83] According to this logic, state forces again captured Rodríguez and two of his allies on May 12. This time the arrest occurred on the pretext of a plot to purchase stolen ammunition from a young boy the previous day.[84] There was never a formal investigation or trial related to the charges or to discover whether there was actually a plot or a crime. However, one of the accused, subsequently released, testified to the authorities that Rodríguez was responsible for the theft of bullets. Then, on May 14, Medinaveytia had Rodríguez and an ally summarily executed by firing squad at Durango's Juárez Barracks.[85] The PCM and the Comintern began an international campaign to protest the Mexican state for the execution, which only increased state antagonism against them.[86] The killing was an extralegal execution or a state assassination because it happened suddenly, without trial, against a captive that the state considered an enemy, as during war. The victim was not an enemy combatant in any formally declared war but was a veteran of the state's war against its own military rebels, had subsequently been accused by state authorities of insubordination and subversion during their war with religious rebels, and had finally used revolutionary language and symbolism against the state.

In their respective messages to Emilio Portes Gil, Alberto Terrones Benítez and General Manuel Medinaveytia both justified the execution in terms of state security against political and ideological subversion that might lead to a revolutionary uprising. Terrones Benítez made no mention of stolen war matériel or plans for an uprising, and instead claimed that Rodríguez's circulation of Communist propaganda after his release in late April was the main reason for the execution.[87] Medinaveytia mentioned the ammunition theft charges as a reason for the initial imprisonment. He claimed that the "subversive" Rodríguez "was a danger for public peace," and speculated that he "might have drawn the masses of campesinos into a rebellion" against "the constituted institutions."[88] Medinaveytia also added the crucial detail that he had requested permission from Calles to carry out the execution and that he had received authorization in a telegram on May 13 to "proceed at once to execute the individual in question." Medinaveytia implicated Calles, but neither Calles nor Terrones Benítez, nor Portes Gil accepted responsibility. Portes Gil later claimed the killing was unjustified and that it led to a personal conflict with Calles.[89]

Much of the history related to execution of Rodríguez remains a mystery. It seems to have occurred because, by representing the Communists' transition to open revolutionary antagonism against the Mexican state, Rodríguez and his

allies continued to threaten the state after the fighting against the Escobar Rebellion had ended and while the Cristero Rebellion was ongoing. Since Rodríguez was a PCM leader, the LNC treasurer, and a BOCN organizer, his execution removed one of the most connected organizers and leaders of these different organizations. This single act allowed the state to further divide and diminish the PCM and its associated organizations.

Movements in Ruins

The increasing state violence against the PCM and its allied labor and agrarian organizations in May, exemplified by aggression at the May Day demonstration in Mexico City and the execution of Rodríguez, was part of a pattern of violence against these organizations that began earlier in the spring and continued through the summer of 1929. To deploy violence, state leaders relied on the PNR, allied politicians, military, police, and other security forces, as well as local thugs and paramilitaries in the pay of landlords. With these means, state leaders activated and combined various forms of violence against these organizations as if they were belligerents despite the fact that they remained legal. Nonetheless, the state acted against them with aggression and deterrence.

In Durango, the execution of José Guadalupe Rodríguez halted preparations to organize the BOCN in that state.[90] In neighboring Coahuila, military forces supported by former governor and then PNR president Manuel Pérez Treviño placed BOCN candidate Rodríguez Triana in peril, constrained his campaign, and forced him to flee his home territory during a brief visit.[91] In Jalisco, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz, PCM labor and agrarian organizers and leaders faced increased state-directed aggression, including assaults on their offices, arrests, and attempts on their lives, and locally elected Communist representatives were thrown out of office.[92] In Mexico City, BOCN Secretary of Organization, and rising PCM leader Hernán Laborde lost his elected position in the federal congress in Orizaba for the PFU.[93] Following Laborde's public denunciation of the proposed visit of US president-elect Herbert Hoover the previous year, and false accusations that Laborde supported Gilberto Valenzuela and the Escobar Rebellion in the spring, a bloc of congressmen under the leadership of Gonzalo N. Santos forced Laborde out of office on May 27. State repression in the spring reduced the already limited power of the Communist Party and its associated labor and agrarian organizations.

Most effective and divisive was the state's neutralization and cooptation of the LNC. At this time, the PCM, BOCN, and CSUM all intensified their

revolutionary language and symbolism against the Mexican state and began to suffer state persecution. The LNC continued to distance itself from all of these organizations. The LNC's earlier declaration of support for the state and the Portes Gil provisional government, suspension of independent political activity, and shift away from relations with the other organizations during the Escobar Rebellion all remained in effect as the Escobar Rebellion ended. Immediately after the LNC published these declarations in a manifesto on March 23, PCM leader Rafael Carrillo requested that LNC leader Úrsulo Galván clarify and confirm his position. When he did not do so, the PCM condemned the LNC manifesto in both *El Machete* and in a circular to its members on March 30.[94] Galván did not respond until May 1, when he suggested his willingness to cooperate with the PCM and other organizations again, but also threatened to fully end LNC relations with these organizations if the PCM did not agree.[95] The PCM agreed to Galván's proposal to develop a common plan for future action, but the PCM had by then also demanded that Galván retract the LNC manifesto of late March, resume LNC support for the BOCN and its electoral campaign for Rodríguez Triana, and submit to PCM discipline.[96]

Úrsulo Galván did not agree to the PCM's demands and still had not done so when state forces executed José Guadalupe Rodríguez on May 14. However, on May 15, in a message to the agrarian leagues, Galván and the LNC leadership ended relations with the PCM and *El Machete* and ended the LNC's cooperation with the PCM to support the BOCN and the Rodríguez Triana campaign.[97] In this message, the LNC leadership lamented the state execution of Rodríguez and promised protests in response, but effectively blamed the PCM for the killing. The same day Galván assured Portes Gil of the LNC's support.[98] Galván and the LNC leadership opposed the PCM's increasingly revolutionary language against the state, its agrarian reform, and Governor Adalberto Tejeda's disarmament of LNC agrarian forces in Veracruz after the Escobar Rebellion. The LNC leadership considered the PCM's antagonistic language and the violent state response to endanger the LNC's alliances with the Mexican state.

Galván's responses to the execution of Rodríguez ended LNC relations with the PCM, and with the BOCN and CSUM that the LNC previously helped to create. The responses simultaneously affirmed LNC support for the Mexican state. Galván's disavowal of his comrades was the single act that most definitively damaged the organizations and relations that had taken so long to form. Galván's betrayal had far-reaching consequences for all involved. Since the LNC provided the PCM with its large rural base of popular support, the majority of members in both the BOCN and CSUM, and the funds for both the creation

and operation of the BOCN and the Rodríguez Triana campaign, there was no clear way for any of these organizations to immediately recover once the LNC broke away. Since the conflicts between the PCM and LNC had lasted for years, and the antagonism between them had increased in the spring, the end of relations was no surprise to anyone, but no one knew when it would happen. Regardless of expectations, the specific moment and the circumstances in which this break occurred turned out to be especially debilitating. In retrospect, the agreement to create new organizations out of previously existing labor and agrarian organizations was doomed by the long struggle within the PCM between its leadership under Carrillo and LNC rivals under Galván.

Galván's withdrawal of the LNC from these organizations clarified trends that had become practically irreversible through the spring. His decision finally forced the PCM to expel him on May 22.[99] However, the long-delayed expulsion only made things worse for the PCM and its still-allied organizations, the BOCN and CSUM, because of the loss of any semblance of power over the LNC and its agrarian leagues. The deaths, arrests, and removals from office all continued. Rodríguez's execution and the LNC's break with the other organizations also led the PCM and the much-reduced BOCN to declare themselves revolutionary enemies of the state. With the LNC gone and the Mexican state forces on the attack, the PCM and BOCN increased their hostility toward the state and the Portes Gil provisional government. For this purpose, they deployed slogans like "The Bourgeois Revolution Has Failed," and they assailed "The Blood-Stained Hands of the 'Revolutionary' Government," with slogans like "Down with the Government and the Bourgeois Assassins!"[100] However, the PCM and the other organizations like BOCN and CSUM no longer had the funds, rural support, assumption of state tolerance, protection, and power that the LNC offered, but which proved illusory. Because they had no real plan or capacity for defense, resistance, or revolution, these organizations were more vulnerable to state violence than ever before. For the rest of the year, these organizations increased their revolutionary antagonism against the Mexican state, which hastened their decay by ruining what remained.

Conclusion

In response to several national crises at the end of the first decade after the Mexican Revolution, many organizations and independent parts of people's movements began to align with each other. Within a few short years, however, their leaders were forced to choose between the Communist Party's increasing revolutionary antagonism toward the Mexican state and alliance with the state. Their decisions influenced how they fared in the following years, but state leaders ultimately strengthened the state at the expense of most people's movements, including those parts that resisted the state and those that allied with the state. During the provisional presidency of Emilio Portes Gil, while still under the influence of his predecessor, Plutarco Elías Calles, state leaders deployed many solutions to overcome the many state crises. They created a state-allied national party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR) in March 1929, defeated the Escobar Rebellion in May, negotiated its truce with the Catholic Church and the Cristeros in July, and prepared for presidential elections in November. State leaders also reduced the power of the state's formerly allied labor and agrarian organizations, the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Mexican Labor Confederation, CROM) and Partido Nacional Agrarista (National Agrarian Party, PNA), and that of the labor and agrarian movements as a whole.

After a decade of building people's movements, the traumatic struggles in the spring of 1929 severely debilitated the independent parts of the labor and agrarian movements and sundered relations between them. They never recovered from the struggles that tore them asunder, and subsequent events only confirmed and extended their debilitation and suppression. In the summer, after managing greater threats, Mexican state leaders began their most violent offensive against the Partido Comunista de México (Communist Party of Mexico, PCM) and its associated labor and agrarian organizations. That offensive targeted the Bloque Obrero y Campesino Nacional (National Worker and Peasant Bloc, BOCN), which organized against the PNR in that year's presidential electoral campaign, and the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México (Unitary Union Confederation of Mexico, CSUM), which organized to fight for workers' rights. Even though the Liga Nacional Campesina (National

Peasant League, LNC) broke with all of these organizations and aligned with the state, the state guaranteed its demise.

In early June, federal police closed the national offices of the PCM and its newspaper, *El Machete,* in Mexico City, and in late August, police forces destroyed the Communists' printing presses and printed materials as part of a Mexican Red Scare.[1] These attacks led to years of clandestine activity for the Communists and the illegal publication of *El Machete*.[2] In response to Mexican state persecution and the demands of the Communist International (Comintern), the PCM finally defined itself as a fully revolutionary adversary of the state in the summer of 1929. Following the Comintern Executive Committee's Tenth Plenum in July that extended the Global Socialist Offensive and adopted a strategy of revolutionary immediacy beyond the decisions of its Sixth World Congress in 1928, the PCM Central Committee held its own Plenum in July 1929. Its resulting resolutions, titled "Against Opportunism! For Bolshevization!," forcefully criticized the PCM's past errors and failures, while forecasting "The Imminence of a New Worker and Peasant Revolution" that it would lead in the near future.[3]

According to the resolutions, the PCM would have to secure "the hegemony of the proletariat" in "an anti-imperialist revolution that will be, in its beginnings, in the countryside, a petit-bourgeois democratic revolution to overthrow large landlords, and a socialist revolution in the cities."[4] This revolution did not happen. Considering all that took place that year and before, any revolution was unlikely. The PCM's stance of total revolutionary antagonism against the state generated greater repression. Its decisions to expel members and leaders who it labeled opportunists served to increase internal friction. The ranks of the expelled eventually included Úrsulo Galván, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, the leaders of the LNC, BOCN, and CSUM, respectively. This encouraged Rivera and Siqueiros to leave Mexico for extended periods of emigration and exile, including artistic sojourns in the United States. The expulsions, combined with the PCM's revolutionary decisions and the resulting state attacks and internal disagreements, further attenuated the strength of the PCM and the labor and agrarian organizations that remained under its control, and increased divisions within the labor and agrarian movements as a whole.[5]

The New York Stock Market crash that October and subsequent global Great Depression made the already bleak situation grim. Increasingly violent state repression during the Depression forced the PCM and its allied organizations underground.[6] It was difficult for the PCM to operate and communicate with its members and the public, and its capacity to manage or lead the BOCN and

CSUM, or regain control of the LNC, was reduced. These fractured organizations turned into fractions by the winter and fragments thereafter. By then, there was not much to salvage from the wreckage. The PCM's membership declined by two-thirds, from 3,000 members early in 1929 to 1,000 that winter. A year later, its membership was half that figure and mostly underground.[7] In their private correspondence, PCM organizers estimated that during the election month of November 1929 alone, state forces killed sixteen of its members and imprisoned over one hundred of them.[8] In December 1929, Hernán Laborde replaced Rafael Carrillo as the PCM secretary general, and he began with the hard task of maintaining the PCM as a clandestine organization through the Depression and despite relentless state repression.[9] Provisional President Portes Gil's end of diplomatic relations with the USSR in January 1930, his last month in office, increased the international stakes of this Mexican Red Scare.[10] Deportations of international Communists in Mexico soon followed and continued during the regime of Portes Gil's successor, Pascual Ortiz Rubio. The wave of anti-Communist state terror reached a gruesome extreme on June 29, 1930, when state and allied forces massacred twenty Communists in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, including a woman later memorialized as a martyr, Martina Deras.[11] During this time, the BOCN, CSUM, LNC, and PCM continued to decay.

The BOCN exemplified the inability of independent labor and agrarian organizations to maintain organized relations with each other and the practical impossibility of alliances within and between the labor and agrarian movements. The LNC's decision to align with the Mexican state against the PCM in the spring of 1929, the PCM's transition to clandestine operations in the summer and fall, and the increased state persecution all adversely affected the BOCN by the time of the election of November 1929. From its creation in January to the presidential election in November, 700 individual organizations joined the BOCN, which in turn created nine statewide and sixty-two local blocs. The earliest and strongest of these blocs were in Veracruz, but the BOCN's mostly rural membership there remained isolated and dispersed.[12] They also suffered in competition with the Liga de Comunidades Agrarias del Estado de Veracruz (League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Veracruz, LCAEV), which remained in the LNC under the leading influence of former Communist Úrsulo Galván and Governor Adalberto Tejeda. In Veracruz and elsewhere in Mexico, the Secretariat of Governance and the PNR disrupted the BOCN's electoral activity and reduced its power to win votes.[13] The LNC's decision to leave the BOCN removed most of the BOCN's membership, leadership, and potential funds. After this break with the LNC, the PCM barely had the resources to

manage its own operations, much less an electoral campaign, and it could not keep the BOCN organized, collect dues, continue recruitment campaigns, or consistently communicate with its members or the electorate.[14]

The PCM's revolutionary decisions in July 1929 also called into question the BOCN's contradictory purpose as an electoral alternative to the Mexican state that nonetheless operated according to its registration and other electoral and political rules, which state leaders used against the BOCN. Months before the election, the PCM considered dissolving the BOCN and ending its campaign, and the PCM candidate Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana nearly withdrew his candidacy.[15] A BOCN conference in October decided to continue his campaign through the election despite certain defeat.[16] The PCM's expulsion of BOCN leaders Galván and Rivera before the 1929 election exposed the PCM's and BOCN's electoral incapacities.[17] So did the PCM's conflict with Rodríguez Triana, who it condemned as treacherous after the election. This all contributed to the BOCN's organizational breakdown and electoral failure in the latter half of the year.

The support by Mexican state leaders for their favored candidate, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, against the rival candidacies of Rodríguez Triana and José Vasconcelos, led to the PNR's first overwhelming victory. In the presidential election of November 17, 1929, Ortiz Rubio received nearly 2 million votes, more than 90% of the total.[18] Once in power, the Ortiz Rubio regime worsened conditions for its opponents.[19] The PCM used the BOCN to run opposition electoral campaigns for several years, but the PCM and BOCN could barely withstand the next wave of anti-Communist state repression or the overwhelming dominance and hegemony of the PNR.[20] The electoral failure of 1929, rooted in the revolutionary failures of the previous spring and summer, foreclosed subsequent attempts by the PCM or any other left-wing or revolutionary parties or organizations to unite the labor and agrarian movements on a national level for electoral, revolutionary, or other political purposes, for or against the state or its allied party for the rest of the century.

The CSUM and LNC also suffered through the final year of the decade and after. Both exemplified the difficulty of holding independent labor and agrarian organizations together and the challenges of keeping them in existence. When the CSUM organized in January 1929, it had approximately 400,000 members, 300,000 members from the LNC's agrarian leagues and 40,000–116,000 from unions in several industries. With the LNC's loss in spring 1929, the CSUM's leadership privately estimated that, by December 1929, the CSUM retained only 25,000 workers, versus its rivals in the labor movement, which it estimated at 35,000–40,000 for the CROM and 12,000 for the anarchist Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT).[21] As in

the case of the BOCN, the LNC's withdrawal and the subsequent removal of most of its membership severely diminished the CSUM's power. So did state repression of the PCM and its growing internal discord.

In August 1929, the CSUM, still led by David Alfaro Siqueiros, joined with other labor organizations, including the CROM, to protest Portes Gil's updated federal labor law project and labeled it fascist, just as Siqueiros and other PCM unionists had condemned the previous year's version.[22] This opposition from unions, along with opposition from companies and business associations, as well as congressional disunity, prevented the labor legislation from going forward at this time, but could not stop its eventual passage in 1931.[23] The onset of the global depression and clandestine competition within an ever more complex and divided labor movement reversed the CSUM's efforts to organize industrial workers against companies and the Mexican state for worker protections, strike rights, unemployment insurance, and the rights of women workers. Siqueiros meanwhile relinquished leadership of the CSUM, which contributed to his expulsion by the PCM in March 1930, followed by his imprisonment and exile.[24] Subsequent state attacks on the CSUM's 1930 May Day protest, raids on its offices, and arrests of its remaining leaders that December smashed its force as an isolated revolutionary fraction within the labor movement.[25]

Throughout 1929, the LNC remained the dominant organization in the national agrarian movement. Initially, it seemed to benefit most from Úrsulo Galván's end of relations with the PCM, BOCN, and CSUM, and from its own display of explicit support for the Mexican state against these organizations, during and after the Escobar Rebellion in spring 1929. Compared to the declining fortunes of the PCM, BOCN, and CSUM, the LNC's immediate future relations with the state seemed rosy, free from the internal ideological and revolutionary discord, and state repression that the other organizations suffered. However, the LNC soon experienced the worst outcome: it disappeared completely. At the close of the Escobar Rebellion, Galván and the other LNC leaders continued to pledge their loyalty to Calles and Portes Gil, but they also remained dependent on their patron, Tejeda, who continued to fund the Veracruz and national agrarian leagues.[26] However, Tejeda refused to support the PNR and to cooperate with its plans to organize in Veracruz. Galván and the LNC predictably followed Tejeda in his rejection of the PNR. Days after the beginning of Ortiz Rubio's presidency state leaders responded by moving against the LNC.

In February 1930, during the LNC's national congress at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, PNR politicians tried to take control of the proceedings and police forces prevented the entry of LNC delegates.[27] As Galván

and other LNC leaders protested at the Secretariat of Governance offices, PNR members took over the LNC, and elected a rival leadership. The PNR leader, secretary of industry, and ally to Calles, Luis L. León, then discredited Galván. León accused Galván and his allies of Communism even though Galván had broken with the Communist Party the previous year. The state takeover divided the LNC into three parts: one controlled by the PNR, another by Galván, and another by the PCM. Soon after, Galván traveled to the Mayo Clinic in the United States for medical treatment, where he suddenly died in July 1930.[28]

After Galván's death, the largest of the three resulting organizations called itself the Liga Nacional Campesina (LNC) "Úrsulo Galván," in honor of its former leader, and remained dedicated to Tejeda, who continued to fund it. This "Genuine" LNC and the other two groups then faced off in extraordinarily complex rivalries over political relations with the state and the PNR and relations between leagues throughout the country.[29] Struggles for power over the most powerful Veracruz agrarian league shattered it into myriad leagues, including rival "red" and "white" ones.[30] The decisions by Galván and the LNC leaders to align with the state against their former comrades and associated labor and agrarian organizations might have initially benefited the LNC and its leaders. However, the personal, political, and organizational circumstances and allegiances that changed after Galván's alignment with the Mexican state against the Communists extinguished the LNC's existence. This further divided the agrarian movement. By then, the agrarian movement was as fragmented as the labor movement, if not more so.

The people's movements and their constituent labor unions and agrarian leagues suffered more and mattered even less as they experienced entropy through the early years of the global depression. The labor movement continued its erosion and fragmentation, leaving many unions on their own. The agrarian movement experienced a worse fate, as none of the major national organizations survived into the next decade, and as the agrarian leagues devolved to focus on ever more local and regional concerns. The Communist Party and its allied and associated organizations did not disappear, but went further below ground into clandestine activity before returning as a leading force among people's movements later in the decade. Some of the organizations that grew out of Communist attempts to form a revolutionary alliance between the labor and agrarian movements barely survived, with much less force than when they were first created, and most eventually dissolved. Their dissolution helps explain their elision in the history and memory of this era.

Mexican state leaders and the state-allied party, the PNR, played important roles in the ruin of people's movements. Overall, the self-described Revolutionary state and party had deleterious effects on many movements, not just the labor movement or the agrarian movement. The failure of revolutionary remnants within those movements represented by the Communists had long-lasting results. One result was the highly divided Left for the rest of the century. The state and party were also damaging for movements like the Cristeros, who rebelled again, and their descendants, the Sinarquistas. The Sinarquistas were Catholic fascist anarchists who later formed one of the most powerful people's movements ever on the far Right and strongly influenced the Right from then on. The Mexican state and the PNR faced severe challenges of their own during the economic crisis of the early 1930s and the brief governments of Ortiz Rubio in 1930–32 and Abelardo L. Rodríguez in 1932–34, during which Calles continued to exert great force. However, the solutions that state leaders deployed in the late 1920s were effective at strengthening the state then and later. After the creation of the allied PNR, the state continued to accumulate power at the expense of movements.

The revival of the labor and agrarian movements, this time with state support, and the great reforms during the regime of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934–40, especially in the late 1930s after Cárdenas's break with Calles, continued this trend. As president, Cárdenas supported the rise of industrial unionism, nationalized the oil and railroad industries, briefly allowed union administration of the railroad industry, and increased agrarian reform. These reforms, reminiscent of those the BOCN proposed in its original program, might give the impression that the later versions of labor and agrarian movements overcame their earlier problems. They may also imply that the post-revolutionary Mexican state and its allied party then made lasting changes that were favorable to these people's movements. However, these assumptions can be misleading. The Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Workers of Mexico, CTM), founded in 1936, certainly organized more powerfully than ever for industrial workers. The CTM in turn provided industrial working-class support for Cárdenas's reforms in 1936–40. The Confederación Nacional Campesina (National Peasant Confederation, CNC), founded in 1938, included what remained of the agrarian leagues that had previously existed in the LNC. However, the CNC was originally subjected to greater state control than the CTM during Cárdenas's extensive agrarian reform. The CTM and CNC together provided the Cárdenas government with popular support for a uniquely Mexican Popular Front against Fascism and War, in which

the revived PCM played a critical role. The Popular Front–era Communists were indispensable to the creation of industrial unionism in Mexico but could not maintain their leadership in the unions. Nor could they organize unity or alliances between labor and agrarian organizations and movements as they had first attempted the previous decade. Cárdenas prevented such alliances and made sure organizations and movements remained formally separate.

State support for people's movements and their demands proved temporary. Over the long term, the result was increased state control over movements. After the hard struggles of the 1920s, the labor and agrarian movements had even greater difficulties developing as strong independent forces, or even considering the creation of revolutionary cross-class alliances against the state that Communists had originally promoted and that organizations like the BOCN and CSUM began to represent. Once state leaders created a state-allied party, it became difficult, if not impossible, for labor or agrarian organizations or the broader movements to break away from the state, much less challenge it. This was already true with the creation of the PNR in 1929. It became practically irreversible with the creation of Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (Party of the Mexican Revolution, PRM) in 1938 and its creation of four separate party "sectors." The PRM absorbed the dominant organizations of each movement, the CTM and CNC within labor and agrarian sectors, along with a "popular sector," and the military, which did not survive as a separate party sector. After World War II, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), founded in 1946, inherited this sectoral structure of separation and control. The power of the post-war, state-allied party over people's movements and organizations proved to be enduring.

From midcentury to the millennium, Mexican state power over these movements fortified state dominance, hegemony, and stability through the PRI. During and after the Cold War, in continuous alliance with the United States, the Mexican state and the PRI diminished the power of the dominant parts of mass movements within party sectors. In the early post-war era, there were several attempts to make the labor movement independent of the state and its allied party. These attempts at independence, often initiated or led by railroad union members, spread to many industries, but they were destined for failure and all ended in defeat. As during the struggles in the first post-revolutionary decade, the disempowerment of these organizations and movements further strengthened the state and party. Together this dialectic of state empowerment and movement disempowerment contributed to the growth, development, and overall intensification of capitalism in Mexico. Capitalism based at home and

from abroad grew through, contributed to, and survived many changes and crises through the latter half of the century and after, and many different kinds of people's movements arose in response.

Decades of struggles for women's rights and equality and to end violence against women continued. Women also played significant roles in the rise of powerful teachers' unions, which influenced labor, educational, and many other social movements. Students in Mexico City and elsewhere mobilized in spectacular protests, but state and other forces responded with virulence and violence when they repressed them in massacres. Successive urban and rural movements, as in Morelos and Guerrero, armed themselves against the state, but the state also repressed them. Others, often in the name of civil society, organized in the absence of the state. Uprisings in Chiapas and later in Oaxaca raised demands for popular justice and indigenous rights, but, like so many others, they also suffered state and other violence. The later suppression of many of these movements echoed the earlier suppression of movements in the first years after the Mexican Revolution. After the millennium, drug wars, and health crises due to the global pandemic exponentially increased death and suffering for many and placed people, organized in movements or not, in grave danger. Through all of these changes, the labor and agrarian movements remained divided, as independent forces continued to confront the dominant confederations under state and party control. This caused complex conflicts over representation and relations with companies, the state, and successive parties in power. These people's movements thus experienced extreme challenges beyond the millennium. This is known, but the specific ways their earlier struggles influenced the later struggles is not. Conscious awareness of the neglected and forgotten parts of these earlier people's movements and struggles may allow for greater understanding of the wider movements that they belonged to and why later versions of these and other movements suffered such adversity.

NOTES

Introduction

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Chapter 1

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2. DEN, *Quinto censo*, 1930, xix, 40, took "rural" to mean under 2,500 people, while the 1921 census limited it to 2,000. The exact numbers were 9.86 of 14.33 million, or 68.95%, in 1921, and 11.01 of 16.52 million, or 66.53%, in 1930. "Rural" did not mean the same thing as "agrarian" or "agricultural." Many kinds of economic activities and work, including in modern industries, occurred in rural areas besides agriculture. John Womack, Jr., "Carta a Friedrich Katz," trans. Silvia L. Cuesy, in *Revolución y exilio en la historia de México: Homenaje a Friedrich Katz*, ed. Javier Garciadiego and Emilio Kourí (Chicago: University of Chicago, Katz Center for Mexican Studies, El Colegio de México, and Ediciones Era, 2010), 21–27.

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7. DEN, *Quinto censo*, 1930, vii, xi, 67, 72–76; DEN, *Primer censo industrial de 1930: Resumenes generales*, I (Mexico City, 1933), 7–8. I do not offer an exact number for industrial workers other than approximately half a million to avoid giving the impression that aggregating the various forms of data allow for an exact count or more than an approximation. Higher estimates are based on adding large census categories that were not necessarily limited to industrial workers; see Donald B. Keesing, "Structural Change Early in Development: Mexico's Changing Industrial and Occupational Structure from 1895 to 1950," *The Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 4 (December 1969): 716–38; Kevin J. Middlebrook, *Paradox*, 75.

8. DEN, *Quinto censo*, 1930, xi, 67, 72–74; DEN, *Primer censo agrícola-ganadero 1930: Resumen general*, I (Mexico City, 1936), 34–35; Simpson, *Ejido*, 610–612, 654.

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Chapter 2

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22. Carrillo to Woog, Mexico City, January 9, 1923; Díaz Ramírez to Woog, Mexico City, February 1, March 22, April 24, September 17, October 5, December 1 and 15, 1923, March 27, Puebla, February 18, 1924, Xalapa, October 27, and December 24, 1925, June 23, 1926, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-33, 495-108-41, and 495-108-66; Allen to Woog, Mexico City, September 4, November 18, and December 23, 1923, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-33; Wolfe to Woog, Mexico City to Moscow, N.D. but mid-November 1924, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-49.

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35. Andrea Kettenmann, *Diego Rivera, 1886–1957: A Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art*, trans. Antony Wood (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), 23–45; Lear, *Proletariat*, 5, 10, 12–13, 147–57, 69, 76–77, 83–84, 87–111; Smith, *Art*, 1–85; Martínez Verdugo, "Comunismo," 57–58; Taibo, *Bolshevikis*, 188, 201–5, 209–10, 233, 235–36, 248–49; Carr, *Marxism*, 35–37; Ortiz Peralta, "Izquierda," 53, 56; Spenser, *Stumbling*, 134, 153–54, 197–98; Jeifets and Jeifets, *Diccionario*, 311–12, 595–96, 649–51. See also, Lomnitz, *Death*, 390–419.

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103. Díaz Ramírez to Woog, Mexico City, September 17, 1923, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-33; Krestintern to Galván, Moscow, November 30, 1923, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-36; LCAEV, "Acta," 49–50; Fowler Salamini, *Radicalism*, 43, 51; Martínez Verdugo, "Comunismo," 60; Taibo, *Bolshevikis*, 220; Acosta Díaz, *Lucha*, 35, 37; Jeifets and Reynoso Jaime, "Frente," 20; Domínguez Pérez, *Agraristas*, 30; Jeifets and Jeifets, "Alianza," 76; Reynoso Jaime, *Machetes*, 140, 152, 178.

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116. LNC, *Primer Congreso*, 16–18.

117. Agrarian Leagues of Veracruz, Jalisco, Puebla, Michoacán, and Morelos, "Congreso Campesino Nacional, Convocatoria," Mexico City, October 1, 1926, *El Machete*, no. 53, October 28, 1926; LNC, *Congreso*, 16–18; Epigmenio Guzmán, "Manifiesto: A los Campesinos del Estado de Veracruz," Xalapa, November 1, 1926, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-65; Fowler Salamini, *Radicalism*, 53–54; Martínez Verdugo, "Movimiento," 83; Jeifets and Reynoso Jaime, "Frente," 28–31; Domínguez Pérez, *Agraristas*, 30–32; Jeifets and Jeifets, "Alianza," 83–85; Reynoso Jaime, *Machetes*, 291–304.

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122. LNC, "Declaración de Principios," in LNC, *Congreso*, 44–45.

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125. LCAEV, "Acta," 43–48, for attacks on workers and the labor movement.

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127. LNC, "Declaración," 44.

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130. Castellanos, "Estatutos," Article 1-I and 2-I, 45, 47.

Chapter 3

1. Barrios, *Escuadrón*.

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3. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 71–73; Barrios and Alfonso López Pineda, "Nuevo Comité de la Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones," *El Machete*, no. 58, January 1–15, 1927.

4. Barrios and López Pineda to Francisco J. Moreno, Mexico City, December 23, 1926, in Rodea, *Movimiento*, 477–78.

5. "Huelga General Ferrocarrilera: Los Autónomos secundarán el Movimiento para vencer a la Empresa Imperialista," *El Machete*, no. 58, January 1–15, 1927.

6. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 72–94. Next quotes from 89–90.

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8. Barrios and Miguel Fernández to Mariano Cabrera, Mexico City, January 15, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

9. SCOP, *Reglamento*, 3–370.

10. Barrios and Fernández to Cabrera, Mexico City, January 20, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

11. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 107–17.

12. CTC Commission and Plenum Representatives, "Acuerdo de Huelga," Mexico City, February 5, 1927, in Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 124–27. Quote from "Acuerdo," Point 9.

13. Barrios and Fernández to Cabrera, and to Luis N. Morones, Mexico City, February 7, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

14. Camilo E. Pani to CTC, Mexico City, February 8, 1927, AGN, DT, 986-3; Pani to Morones, Mexico City, February 8, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Pani to Morones, Mexico City, February 9, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-1; Mexico, *Constitución*, 1917, Article 123.

15. Morones to Francisco J. Moreno, Mexico City, December 8, 1926, AGN, DT, 985–3.

16. Morones to Barrios, Mexico City, February 14, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; SCOP, *Ley de Ferrocarriles*; also published in *DOF*, April 26, 1926.

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21. CTC, "Acuerdo de Huelga," Mexico City, February 5, 1927, in Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 124–27, Point 3; CTC, "Manifiesto de la Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones: A la Huelga Compañeros," Mexico City, February 1927, AGN, DT, 987-1; Barrios and Fernández, "Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones, Comité General de Huelga: A Todo el Personal Confederada, A Todos los Trabajadores del País," Mexico City, February 11, 1927, AGN, DT; Jorge Díaz Ortiz and Cirio Palafox, "Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones, Consejo Divisional en México," Mexico City, February 14, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; CTC, Consejo Divisional de México, Comité de Huelga, "Huelga General: Boletín de Huelga Número Dos," Mexico City, March 14, 1927, *El Machete*, no. 60, February 15–28, 1927; Benítez, "Informe," 7–9; Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 134.

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28. Campa, *Testimonio*, 37–38.

29. Pani to Morones, Mexico City, April 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28, and 30, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-4.

30. Pani to Morones, May 10, 1927; Cervantes Torres telegrams to all Department of Labor inspectors, Mexico City, May 18, 1927, AGN, DT, 987–4.

31. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 137–43.

32. Pani to Morones, Mexico City, February 22, 1927, AGN, DT, 987–1.

33. M. Muñoz, Superintendente General, Ferrocarril Interoceánico de México, "Novedades en las Divisiones del Interoceánico, con Motivo de la Huelga de Mecánicos, de las 9 horas de febrero 23 a las 9 horas de febrero 24 de 1927," San Lázaro, Mexico City, February 24, 1927, AGN, DT, 987–1.

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36. Díaz Ortiz and Palafox, "Consejo Divisional en México," February 14, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Díaz Ortiz and Santiago Espinosa to Alianza de Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos,

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43. Hernán Laborde, "Mi Huelga de Hambre," Mexico City, March 16, 1927, *El Machete*, no. 61, March 15–31, 1927.

44. Martínez to Roberto Cruz, Inspector General de Policía, Mexico City, February 26, 1927, CEMOS, APCM, 3–3.

45. Martínez to Cruz, Mexico City, February 28, 1927, CEMOS, APCM, 3–4; Martinez to Cruz, March 1, 1927, CEMOS, APCM, 3–5, and AGN, *Boletín*, 1978, 20–21.

46. Barrios to Calles, Mexico City, February 26, 1927, CEMOS, APCM, 3–6; General Carlos Real, General Brigadier, Director, Prisión Militar de Santiago to General Manuel Álvarez, Jefe del Estado Mayor Presidencial, Mexico City, March 2, 1927, CEMOS, APCM, 3–6.

47. Cervantes Torres, "Memorándum," Mexico City, March 10, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Morones to Pani, Mexico City, March 28, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Cabrera to Morones, Mexico City, April 6, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

48. Laborde, "Huelga."

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50. Pani to Morones, Mexico City, May 10, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-4; Cervantes Torres telegrams to all Department of Labor inspectors, Mexico City, May 18, 1927, AGN, DT, 987–4.

51. Barrios and Fernández to Calles, Mexico City, February 19, and April 9, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

52. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 161–62; CIHMO, *Ferrocarrileros,* 94–100.

53. Testimony of Guillermo Treviño in CIHMO, *Ferrocarrileros*, 98–99.

54. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 155–59, 167, 193; Clark, *Labor*, 115; Rodea, *Movimiento*, 488–91; William J. Suarez-Potts, "The Railroad Strike of 1927: Labor and Law After the Mexican Revolution," *Labor History* 52, no. 4 (November 2011): 399–416; Suarez-Potts, *Law*, 198–208, 226–27.

55. Barrios to Juez Tercer Supernumerario del Distrito, Mexico City, March 4 and 12, 1927, in CTC, *Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones (CTC) vs. Presidente de la República y Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo (SICT): Juicio de Amparo promovido por Elías Barrios a nombre de la Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones, Patrocinado por el Lic. Antonio Garza Sansores* (Mexico City, 1927), 6–15; Barrios and Antonio Garza Sansores to Juez Tercer Supernumerario del Distrito, "Alegatos en el Incidente de Suspensión," Mexico City, March 14, 1927, and "Recurso de Revisión en el Incidente," Mexico City, March 21, and April 11, 1927, in *CTC vs. Presidente and SICT*, 15–19, 27–30, 30–47; Garza Sansores, Rogerio de la Selva, and Jesús M. Sotelo, "Audiencia en el Incidente de Suspensión," in *CTC vs. Presidente*, 19–23; Butrón to Juez Tercer Supernumerario del Distrito, Mexico City, March 15, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Carlos L. Angeles, Juez Tercer Supernumerario del Distrito, and Adalberto Andrade, "Sentencia en el Amparo," Mexico City, May 3, 1927, in *CTC vs. Presidente*, 59–72.

56. Butrón to Juez Tercer Supernumerario del Distrito Mexico City, May 9, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-4; Barrios and Fernández to Morones, Mexico City, May 9, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Morones to Barrios and Fernández, Mexico City, May 11 and 14, 1927, AGN, DT; Barrios and Garza Sansores to Ministros de la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, "Contestación a los Agravios Expresados por las Autoridades Responsables," Mexico City, May 14, 1927, in *CTC vs. Presidente*, 72–82.

57. Barrios and Fernández to Morones, Mexico City, October 27, 1927, AGN, OC, 407-M-38, Exp. 2; Calles, "Decreto por el cual se establece la Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje," Mexico City, September 17 and 22, 1927, *DOF*, September 23, 1927.

58. JFCA, "Laudo," Mexico City, October 3, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; JFCA President to Morones, Mexico City, October 4, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

59. Los CC Representantes del Gobierno, del Capital y del Trabajo ante la Junta Especial número Uno y del Capital en la Junta Especial número Dos, en contra del voto del C. representante del Trabajo ante esta Junta, quien se negó a firmar, "En México, a los siete días del mes de diciembre . . ." Mexico City, December 7, 1927, Resolution 1, p. 11, in SICT, JFCA, "Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones Contra Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México. Huelga," AGN, Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje

(JFCA), vol. 1, Exp. 1; JFCA, "México, Distrito Federal, a ocho de Diciembre . . ." Mexico City, December 8, 1927, Resolution 2, p. 11, in AGN, JFCA, 1-1; Donato C. Muñoz, Representante del Trabajo ante la Junta Especial Número Dos to CC Representantes del Gobierno, del Capital y del Trabajo ante la Junta Especial Núm. Uno, y del Capital ante la Junta Especial Número Dos de la Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje," Mexico City, December 30, 1927, 7, 12, in AGN, JFCA, 1-1. The labor representative representing the CTC in its legal case estimated 23,856 strikers.

60. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 184–88.

61. Suarez-Potts, *Law*, 226–64.

62. STFRM, "Libro de Actas del IV Congreso Ferrocarrilero," I–III, Mexico City, November 2, and December 20, 1932, and January 11, 1933, AGN, Galería 7, "Documentos del Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros"; Clark, *Labor*, 173–76; Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 193–202; Rodea, *Movimiento*, 45–79; Arnaldo Córdova, *En una época de crisis (1928–1934)*, *COHM*, IX (1980), 160; Samuel León and Ignacio Marván, *En el cardenismo (1934–1940)*, *COHM*, X (1985), 201; Middlebrook, *Paradox*, 84–85.

63. CTM, *50 años de lucha obrera: Historia documental*, 10 vols., I, *1936–1941* (Mexico City: PRI, 1986); Middlebrook, *Paradox*, 83–92.

64. Clark, *Labor*, 57–78, Guadarrama, *Sindicatos*, 150–74.

65. Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 155–87; Campa, *Testimonio*, 39, 225–31; Martínez Verdugo, "Movimiento," 126; Carr, *Marxism*, 47–79.

66. Fracción Comunista Ferrocarrilera, "Llamamiento de los Ferrocarrileros Comunistas a Todos los Ferrocarrileros del País," *El Machete*, no. 69, July 2, 1927; José María Benítez, José Morales M., and Juan L. Pérez, "Resoluciones y Programa aprobados en la Primera Convención del 'Partido Ferrocarrilero Unitario,'" Guadalajara, March 29, 1928, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-92, 1–5; "José Rieles," "La Primera Convención del Partido Ferrocarilero Unitario," *El Machete*, no. 110, April 14, 1928; Benítez, "Informe," 9–12; Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 160, 167–71.

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68. Sindicato de Obreros y Empleados de la Empresa de Telefonos Ericsson, S.A. to Morones, Mexico City, February 15, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Díaz Ortiz and Luis Araiza, "Consejo Divisional de la Confederación de Transportes y Comunicaciones, Comité de Huelga de la Confederación General de Trabajadores: Convocatoria," Mexico City, February 21, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-1; CGT, "Confederación General de Trabajadores, Comité General de Huelga, Circular," Mexico City, February 22, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173-2; Araiza to Morones, Mexico City, February 28, 1927, AGN, DT, 1173–2.

69. Barrios to Adalberto Tejeda, Mexico City, June 1, 1927, AGN, Gobernación, 2.331.6(5-1)5; Barrios, *Escuadrón*, 151–53; Spenser, *Triangle*, 105, 110.

70. LNC, "Declaración de Principios," in LNC, *Congreso*, 44–45; Epigmenio Guzmán, LCAEV, to Calles, quoted in Calles to Morones, Mexico City, March 30, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-3; Morones to Calles, Mexico City, March 31, and April 1, 1927, AGN, DT, 987-3; Guzmán and Antonio Carlón to Calles, Xalapa, April 8, 1927, AGN, OC, 407-M-38, Exp. 2; Faustino Hernández, Sindicato de Agricultores el Porvernir del Campesino, to Calles, Villa Cecilia, Tamaulipas, June 22, 1927, AGN, OC, 407-M-38, Exp. 2; Campa, *Testimonio*, 37.

Chapter 4

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2. CI, "Program," 767; CI, "Manifesto," 1770.

3. (Solomon) A. Lozovsky, "The Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions," *Inprecorr*, VIII, no. 18, March 21, 1928, 341–52; Lozovsky, "Results of the IV Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions," *Inprecorr*, VIII, no. 22, April 12, 1928, 421–22; Lozovsky, "Ante el IV Congreso de la I.S.R.," *El Machete*, no. 107, March 24, 1928; Lozovsky, "Problemas de Estrategia Huelguística," *El Machete*, no. 149, January 26, 1929; Womack, *Posición*, 139–61; Reiner Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), 1920–1937*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Boston: Brill, 2016, Original German, 2014).

4. V. (Vasil) Kolarov, "Revolutionary Alliance of the Workers and Peasantry," *The Communist International, Tenth Anniversary Number, 1919–1929: Ten Years of Struggle for the World Revolution. Lessons and Prospects*, VI, no. 9–10, 346–59, quote from 346. For a similar publication in Spanish in Mexico: "La Alianza de los Obreros y Campesinos," *El Machete*, no. 138, November 7, 1928.

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Chapter 5

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23. PNR, *Democracia*, 1929, 7–243.

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25. BOCN, "El Bloque Obrero y Campesino frente a la Revuelta," Mexico City, March 4, 1929, *El Machete*, no. 155, March 9, 1929.

26. PFU, "Declaración del Partido F. Unitario," Mexico City, March 5, 1929, *El Machete*, no. 155, March 9, 1929.

27. LNC, "Declaración de la L.N.C.," Mexico City, March 4, 1929, *El Machete*, no. 155, March 9, 1929.

28. CSUM, "¡Contra el Avance de la Misera!," *El Machete*, no. 156, March 16, 1929.

29. PCM, "Manifiesto del Partido Comunista A Todos los Obreros y Campesinos de México," Mexico City, March 5, 1929, *El Machete*, no. 156, March 16, 1929; and a slightly altered version published and distributed separately, PCM, "La Revuelta Armada: Manifiesto del Partido Comunista a los Trabajadores de México," Mexico City, March 5, 1929, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-106; PCM, "Actividades," 7–8; PCM, "Informe," May 15, 1929, 16–21; Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 42–46. For the few published references to the PCM's response to the rebellion, see Martínez Verdugo, "Movimiento," 99–102; Carr, *Marxism*, 45; Spenser, *Triangle*, 162; Crespo, "Comunismo," 555–56; Ortiz Peralta, "Izquierda," 55–56; Jeifets and Reynoso Jaime, "Frente," 33; Jeifets and Jeifets, "Alianza," 87; Reynoso Jaime, *Machetes*, 305–10.

30. PCM, "Manifiesto," March 5, 1929, Preamble, Articles 1–7. Next quote from Article 1.

31. Martínez Verdugo, "Movimiento," 114–24, argued that there was no plan or action for revolution, while Spenser, *Triangle*, 163–64, and Spenser, *Stumbling*, 164–68, argued that there might have been a plan and action for revolution, in part to explain the state's later repression. Crespo, "Comunismo," 567, and Reynoso Jaime, *Machetes*, 331–32, explicitly supported the view of Martínez Verdugo that there was no plan or action. Jeifets and Reynoso Jaime, "Frente," 35, seemed to criticize the view of Martínez Verdugo, while Jeifets and Jeifets, "Alianza," 89, did not.

32. (Banderas [Stanislav Pestkovsky]), "La Guerra Civil en México y las Tareas de la Liga Nacional Campesina," March 23, 1929, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-116, 3.

33. Krestintern Secretariat, Moscow, March 29, 1929, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-116. For identification of the pseudonym, Jeifets and Jeifets, *Diccionario*, 541–42.

34. Pestkovsky, "Guerra," 2–5, Theses III–VII.

35. This and next quote from ibid., 6, VIII.

36. Ibid., 7, X.

37. Pestkovsky to PCM, March or April 1929, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-116, 1–4.

38. Edgar Woog to Manuel Díaz Ramírez, Mexico City to Moscow, April 2, 1929, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-105.

39. Woog to Díaz Ramírez, April 2, 1929, 1.

40. Ibid., 3.

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42. Quotes in this paragraph from Woog to Díaz Ramírez, April 2, 1929, 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

43. Spenser, *Triangle*, 133–90; Jonathan Haslam, "Comintern and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1919–1941," *The Cambridge History of Russia* (*CHR*), 3 vols., III, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 636–61.

44. PCM, "Actividades."

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46. PCM, "Oportunismo." The most extensive analyses of this source are Martínez Verdugo, "Movimiento," 120–24, and Crespo, "Comunismo," 571–84. For identification of the pseudonyms, Jeifets and Jeifets, *Diccionario*, 307–9.

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48. PCM, "Oportunismo," 43; Woog to Díaz Ramírez, April 2, 1929, 3; PCM, "Actividades," 8.

49. PCM, "Oportunismo," 42–43.

50. Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I–III. For identification of the pseudonym, Jeifets and Jeifets, *Diccionario*, 736–39.

51. This paragraph is based on Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 32–39, quote from 33.

52. Ibid., 39–40, quotes from 40.

53. All instructions and quotes in the remainder of this paragraph from ibid., 41.

54. Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 52–53; PCM, "Oportunismo," 42–44.

55. Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 52–53, first quote from 52, second and third quotes from 53.

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57. Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 41.

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59. Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 40–54.

60. Woog to Díaz Ramírez, April 2, 1929, 1, 3; Pestkovsky, "Guerra," 6–7, VIII–X.

61. Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 53; Woog to Díaz Ramírez, April 2, 1929, 3; PCM, "Actividades," 8; PCM, "Oportunismo," 43.

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March 23, 1929; Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 45–47; Portes Gil, *Quince*, 247–81; Dulles, *Yesterday*, 436–46; Fowler Salamini, *Radicalism*, 61–65, 88–90; Falcón and García Morales, *Semilla*, 185–90.

63. "Si el Gobierno no Quiere Entregar," *El Machete*, no. 157, March 23, 1929.

64. Pestkovsky, "Guerra," 1–7; Krestintern Secretariat, Moscow, March 29, 1929; Pestkovsky to PCM, March or April 1929, 1–4.

65. LNC, "A los Campesinos de la República," March 23, 1929; LNC Telegram to Portes Gil, March 4, 1929, ECCI, APCM, 495-108-116; Woog, "Rapport," September 15, 1929, I, 55–57; Martínez Verdugo, "Movimiento," 109–10; Carr, *Marxism*, 44; Spenser, *Triangle*, 163; Spenser, *Stumbling*, 165; Jeifets and Reynoso Jaime, "Frente," 33; Jeifets and Jeifets, "Alianza," 87; Reynoso Jaime, *Machetes*, 310–11.

66. "¡Toda la Tierra, no Pedazos de Tierra! Dijo Zapata," and Rodríguez Triana, "Las Enseñanzas de la Revolución del Sur: Entrevista con uno de sus Generales, el Compañero Rodríguez Triana, Candidato del Bloque Obrero y Campesino," *El Machete*, no. 159, April 6, 1929.

67. Rodríguez Triana, "Si es Necesario Moriré por Defender el Programa del B.O.yC." *El Machete*, no. 150, February 2, 1929; Rodríguez Triana, "Enseñanzas," *El Machete*, no. 159, April 6, 1929; "Veinte Años de Lucha por la Tierra y Libertad: Datos sobre la Vida del Camarada Rodríguez Triana, Candidato Presidencial del Bloque Obrero y Campesino," *El Machete*, no. 151, February 9, 1929.

68. Roberto Martínez García, *La visión agrarista del general Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana* (Torreón: Editorial del Norte Mexicano, 1997), 21–76; María Isabel Saldaña, *Pedro V. Rodríguez Triana: Un general de la revolución en Coahuila: Iconografía* (Torreón: Universidad Iberoamericana Plantel Laguna, 1997), 7–36.

69. Rodríguez Triana, "Enseñanzas," *El Machete*, no. 159, April 6, 1929.

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