



REBUILDING THE NATION

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The idealistic and hardheaded revolutionaries in power during the 1920s and 1930s worked with multitudes of everyday Mexicans to rebuild the country. Their objective was not only to repair the damage left from nearly ten years of political upheaval and civil war, but also to reconstruct the nation on a new basis, to regenerate Mexico and its people. Their many and varied efforts to rebuild Mexico constitute one of the most extraordinary episodes not only in that nation's history, but also in the world upheavals of the twentieth century. A nation organized for the benefit of peasants and workers was under construction; a fundamental change in spirit and structure was taking place. Then, in the 1940s, Mexicans chose a different course and abandoned their remarkable experiment in social democracy.

The very fluidity of the power and interests that existed at every political level in the 1920s and 1930s made the reform process uncertain and imperfect, conflicted and often violent, uneven across the country, and subject to slowdowns. In retrospect, we can detect an unfolding process. At the state and local levels, revolutionary leaders nurtured radicalism, encouraged popular mobilization, attacked the Catholic Church, built schools, and redistributed land. In the 1920s, national leaders too were pushed into reform by popular politics more than they wished. During the early 1930s, under the pressure of the Great Depression, a revolutionary momentum seeking radical reconstruction emerged from localities, the provinces, and mass organizations and captured the leadership of the ruling "revolutionary family," a fractious coalition of self-made generals, provincial strongmen, and agrarian and labor leaders. With strong presidential leadership supported by a new official revolutionary party from above and mass mobilization from below, reformers sought to consummate the Mexican Revolution.

In the 1930s, several strands of revolutionary thought and action converged at the national level. Learning from and building on nearly two decades of land

and labor reform, economic nationalism, anticlericalism, and cultural renewal, revolutionaries took dramatic actions to create a new Mexico. This country was designed to be a predominantly agricultural nation composed of democratic landowning peasant communities called *ejidos* (from the Spanish term for village commons). Most *ejidos* would be divided into parcels worked by individual families. In areas of commercial agriculture once dominated by plantations that grew such crops as cotton, sugar, henequen, and coffee, undivided collective *ejidos* would be managed and worked by all of their members as one enterprise. Consumer and producer cooperatives, aided by government credit agencies and regional agricultural colleges, would help raise peasant productivity and income. Beyond agriculture, an extensive system of rural primary schools would transform peones into modern farmers, informed citizens, and patriotic Mexicans.

This nation of *ejidos* would be assisted and supplied by a small industrial sector managed and owned by a combination of Mexican businessmen, worker cooperatives, and—for key industries—the state. Sectors of the economy long dominated by foreign interests would be nationalized and operated for the benefit of all Mexicans. The few foreign enterprises remaining would operate strictly according to Mexican law. Powerful labor unions would protect the rights of workers and help raise their standard of living. Night classes and trade schools, along with sports and recreational centers, would transform those who had been exploited wage slaves into happy, productive citizens.

This new society and economy would be guaranteed by a new system of mass politics. All *ejidos* and unions, as well as the army and the state bureaucracy, would join an official revolutionary party. Through it, the peasant and labor sectors would advance their interests, negotiate their differences, and choose their state governors and their representatives for Congress and the various government departments. Every six years, they would choose a national president.

Mexico reasonably approached this revolutionary vision on the eve of World War II. However, powerful forces within the country and without were already at work undermining the ideal scenario, as well as what had actually been accomplished. A new generation of politicians who came to power in the 1940s, the "cubs" of the Revolution, were entranced by a different—modern, urban, industrial—vision of Mexico. Subsequent regimes were committed to rapid industrialization and the development of commercial agriculture. Stagnation of the *ejido*-based economy fueled urbanization, which only further marginalized the countryside. The militancy of the labor unions would be broken by the national government and the harnessing of workers to accumulate capital on behalf of private industry. This new direction was made possible because the institutions of mass politics—the agrarian and labor organizations

as well as the party itself—were too centralized to begin with and were therefore subject to subversion by careerists and political hacks on behalf of a new governing and business class.

This turn toward the right did not mean counterrevolution. Granted, the unions had been domesticated, but they remained in place and had their rank-and-file constituency to satisfy or appease. And a revolutionary tradition had developed over the past three decades that obstructed any wholesale reversal of revolutionary reforms, even now and then encouraging populist state action. This more conservative Mexico was still far different from the oligarchic or frankly reactionary regimes of many other Latin American countries. In the 1960s and 1970s, when many of the countries of South America suffered under repressive military regimes that waged "dirty wars" against their own people, Mexico resisted for the most part such an authoritarian temptation and instead opened its doors to thousands of political refugees.

Nevertheless, the progressive intellectuals who denounced the "death" of the Mexican Revolution in the 1940s essentially had it right. Every revolution is transitory, of course, and the Mexican Revolution could not be expected to continue without end, despite official rhetoric to the contrary. Thus, while the rebuilding of Mexico proceeded and even accelerated during the postwar era, its revolutionary design, dating from the 1920s and 1930s, was scrapped. In its place, an older, prerevolutionary pattern of social and economic development, one committed to energetic growth without widespread distribution of the fruits of that development, was resumed, in the 1940s, in the name of the Mexican Revolution. Mexicans thereafter became more focused on achieving apparent economic miracles and political stability than on upholding revolutionary hopes and dreams. A new age of order and progress was in the works:

For the ten years from 1910 to 1920, Mexicans devoted most of their energy to war and destruction. When the officially proclaimed era of peace and reconstruction began in 1920, the nation's population was smaller and poorer. By any measure, the cost of those ten years was enormous. The 1921 census counted more than 800,000 fewer people than the country had had eleven years before. Many of the missing, however, were émigrés in the United States, whose number would increase during the 1920s as well. The largest number of deaths came as the result of two epidemics. Famine also took many lives during the worst mid-decade years. The decline in population naturally reduced the working population, perhaps by as much as half a million farmworkers, factory workers, and miners.

The national system of railroads, the proudest accomplishment of those known as *científicos*, supporters of the dictator Porfirio Díaz, was bankrupt and in ruins. More than a thousand miles of telegraph lines were destroyed out of a total of only some twenty thousand miles, in a nation more than twice as large

as Texas. It would take more than a decade to repair the damages and losses, especially because military uprisings in the 1920s only added to the problem.

During the decade, agricultural and mining production had fallen by half. The hacienda system, an economic sector composed of agricultural estates, survived the armed revolution, but thousands of estates were destroyed or simply disappeared. The only sector of the economy to experience growth in this decade was petroleum, which had succeeded to the degree that by the early 1920s, Mexico was one of the largest producers in the world. The foreign debt was an astonishing \$1 billion, and interest payments were overdue. Foreign governments, the United States in particular, were demanding compensation for damages incurred by their citizens. However, the bloated revolutionary army took more than 60 percent of the national budget. As a result of all these factors, Mexico's economy did not experience sustained growth until the 1940s.

National reconstruction, to say nothing of meaningful reform, would require an enormous investment and years of effort under the best of conditions. Yet favorable conditions were hard to find in the 1920s and 1930s. Nationally, military rebellions and popular uprisings consumed scarce resources. Violence persisted at the local level throughout the country for the entire period. The world economic depression of the 1930s hit Mexico hard and was compounded by the forced repatriation of 300,000 to 400,000 migrant workers from the United States.

These tremendous costs of revolution were the price the nation paid for the Constitution of 1917, arguably the most progressive charter in the world. This document provided the basic plan for the rebuilding project. Its designated articles became revolutionary symbols. Yet in 1920, the provisions of the constitution were, with only a few exceptions, little more than promises on paper. No enabling legislation had been passed by Congress. It seemed that the cost had been great and the result pitifully small.

The constitution nevertheless proved to be a powerful goal and instrument. It was the bridge between the popular mobilization of the decade after 1910 and the revolutionary reforms of the 1920s and 1930s. The victorious revolutionary generals used it to justify a new political order that included organized peasants and workers. Ordinary people allied with populist political leaders used the constitution to rebuild the nation. It was the Revolution in law, but it meant little until the Revolution became government.

The armed struggle of the second decade of the century progressively destroyed the national state. Congress was dissolved by General Victoriano Huerta in 1913, the federal army was defeated and extinguished by the summer of 1914, the courts of law simply disappeared as revolutionary justice was dispensed by new generals, and the various states and localities became

the fiefdoms of strongmen. President Venustiano Carranza (1917-20), the first president elected under the new Constitution of 1917, attempted to restore order, recentralize authority, and rebuild the state. But his regime practically ignored the constitution and the new political reality of revolutionary Mexico: the entry of peasants and workers into local and regional politics. When most of the revolutionary army rebelled in 1920 in support of General Alvaro Obregón (president, 1920-24), Carranza had no popular support to draw upon. Future leaders learned this lesson, because Carranza's government was the last government to fall to armed rebellion in the twentieth century.

The men from Sonora who came to power in Mexico City with Obregón had considerable administrative experience and political savvy. Adolfo de la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles had been governors. The triumvirate's dominant member, Obregón, had practiced his political skills at the state and national levels as a political broker, conciliating factions and forming populist coalitions. In their years in state government, the Sonorans had formed their own professional army, patronized and allied themselves with labor unions, and expanded the government's authority to promote economic development. Now, these hardheaded realists were ready and eager to do the same thing on a national scale.

The first task at hand was reconciliation. Although the era of vast armies clashing in great battles was over, Mexico remained at war. Regional rebellions in Chihuahua, Morelos, Chiapas, and elsewhere still were being fought against the national government. In localities and communities too numerous to mention, village fought hacienda, and faction struggled against faction. Adolfo de la Huerta, selected interim president until Obregón was elected to a four-year term in November 1920, negotiated the retirement of Pancho Villa (Chihuahua rebel) and the pacification of the Zapatistas (agrarian revolutionaries of Morelos). Other regional rebellions came to an end and jumped on the new bandwagon. The enemies of Carranza, many of them former Maderistas—followers of Francisco Madero in his successful campaign to defeat Porfirio Díaz in 1910-11—such as José Vasconcelos, were welcomed back to Mexico and into the revolutionary family.

The Sonorans claimed to be the rightful successors to Madero, the genuine constitutionalists, and the radicals who had given the Constitution of 1917 its advanced social and economic provisions. They saw themselves as the true representatives of the Mexican Revolution. Now that the violent stage of the revolution was concluded, they would convert the Revolution into government. "The Revolution transformed into government" ("*La Revolución hecha gobierno*") was the phrase that justified the reestablishment of order.

The new president was the undisputed caudillo (political boss) of the Revolution. He was undefeated in battle, fiercely anticlerical, and a friend of

peasants and workers. Obregón's reputation was formidable, untainted as he was by the mistakes and corruption of the last years of the Carranza regime. He was, in fact, more the pragmatic politician and capitalist than the social revolutionary. He did recognize the need for redistribution of land here and there to pacify those in the countryside. And he made an alliance with organized labor to offset the political power of ambitious generals. Yet beneath these poses, Obregón was nothing if not practical. He believed that Mexico desperately needed economic recovery and growth, to be based on commercial agriculture and a small industrial sector. Government's role, for Obregón, was important. But what was central, he believed, was the conciliation of class interests that would bring peace and progress.

The prospects for political stability in 1920 were, at best, uncertain and precarious. Obregón inherited a bloated revolutionary army of more than 100,000 soldiers and thousands of generals and would-be generals. Regional strongmen and factions—some radical, some conservative, many simply committed to power—dominated the provinces and tolerated varying degrees of central government interference. In a move to negotiate better terms for its petroleum companies and citizens seeking compensation for damages, the United States had recalled its ambassador when Carranza was overthrown and withheld recognition of the new regime. Without this crucial blessing, Obregón could not obtain foreign financing, but his potential enemies could purchase arms and ammunition at the border.

To offset such problems, the new regime improvised a new kind of mass politics. The revolutionary struggle had provided abundant opportunities for popular alliances. In 1913, Obregón had recruited native Yaquis with the promise of land, and during the civil war with Pancho Villa in 1914-15 he negotiated an agreement with Mexico City's dominant labor syndicate for armed workers organized in "Red Battalions" to serve on the front. As a presidential candidate in 1919, he reformed that alliance with the new and rising Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM), headed by Luis Napoleón Morones, a former electrician.

As a result, Obregón received the substantial backing in Congress of Morones's new Mexican Labor Party. The president also solidified his support in rural Mexico. Land redistribution proceeded in the regions where the peasants had mobilized most intensely and fought in the Revolution and where radical state governors encouraged peasant organization into agrarian leagues. In turn, agrarian leaders formed the National Agrarian Party and pledged its support to the president. These broad-based organizations provided a political counterweight to the unpredictable army, profusion of independent political parties, and "enemies" of the Revolution.

During the 1920s, the most fertile political experimentation took place in the states. With Carranza out of the way, reformers and, in a few states,

determined radicals ascended to the governor's palace. The president needed their support, and they needed his. These governors began to create agrarian and labor organizations (in some states arming them) and to form mass-based political parties. With this backing, they started to implement reforms and further encourage and consolidate popular mobilization. In 1923, the American journalist Carleton Beals praised these "experimental laboratories" where "for the first time in Mexican history, a fundamentally new method of social control has been evolved."

Governor Adalberto Tejeda of Veracruz encouraged the organization of labor unions, agrarian leagues, and socialist parties. He made an alliance with the local Communist Party to establish the League of Agrarian Communities and Peasant Syndicates of the State of Veracruz. Similar official agrarian leagues were organized in Michoacán, Aguascalientes, Chiapas, and many other states. The Veracruz league provided the nucleus of the National Peasant League, which was formed in 1926 with a membership of 300,000. In the southeastern state of Yucatán, Governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto took office in 1922, proclaiming the "first socialist government in the Americas." His Leagues of Resistance recruited and organized Maya peasants to advance land reform and the unionization of agricultural workers. In Yucatán and neighboring Campeche, these leagues were then organized as the Socialist Party of the Southeast. Carrillo Puerto also organized Feminist Leagues, which energized the nascent Mexican women's movement. In Yucatán, he legalized divorce, introduced woman suffrage, and encouraged the election of women to political office.

Governor Tomás Garrido Canabal in the state of Tabasco organized a labor-peasant federation that provided a mass base for his radical Socialist Party of Tabasco. Garrido's radicalism leaned more in the direction of cultural than economic restructuring. In particular, his government sought to break the hold of the Catholic Church on the minds and souls of Tabascans. In the northeastern state of Tamaulipas, Governor Emilio Portes Gil built his Border Socialist Party on a foundation of local agrarian leagues and labor unions. Like many official revolutionaries at the state level, Portes Gil pursued a moral offensive to mold a new Mexican citizen. Through prohibitions and regulations, this governor attempted to reduce gambling, blood sports, drinking and drunkenness, prostitution, and other "counterrevolutionary" vices.

Of course, not all provincial regimes were revolutionary. Power in revolutionary Mexico was up for grabs; the rules of the game were complicated and subject to change without notice. In the state of Chiapas, on the border with Guatemala, conservative rebels endorsed Obregón in 1920 and took office. A landowners' government sought to restore the badly shaken old order. This regime survived during Obregón's term but eventually suffered the same fate as Carranza's government and for the same reason. The new political factors

in Chiapas—organized villagers and farm workers—joined forces with populist politicians allied to powerful political figures in Mexico City. This new system of practicing politics became the wave of the future, as demonstrated by the triumph of the Socialist Party of Chiapas in its takeover of the governor's palace and state congress in 1925. Neither at the provincial nor at the national levels was there restoration of a reconstituted old regime, nor was such a thing possible. The emergence of mass politics was one of the permanent revolutionary consequences of the Revolution.

Alvaro Obregón, as the self-proclaimed heir to Francisco Madero (who campaigned and ultimately rebelled for "Effective suffrage and no reelection"), and because of the constitutional restriction against it, could not stand for reelection in 1924. An election, however, as 1920 had certainly revealed, was an invitation for political intrigue leading to a military uprising. Although the caudillo was prepared, conflict was unavoidable. The Sonorans patched up relations with the United States during the Bucareli Conference, so named after a street in Mexico City, in the spring of 1923. Then in July the unpredictable Pancho Villa was gunned down near his hacienda in Parral, Chihuahua, which prevented any rebellion or interference on his part. The United States extended formal diplomatic recognition in August. Within days, Plutarco Elías Calles, the minister of the interior, declared his candidacy for the presidency. Obregón had chosen his successor, but it remained to be seen if he could impose him.

The former president, Adolfo de la Huerta, then became a magnet for those who distrusted, feared, and opposed Calles. Pushed and pulled by various constituencies, de la Huerta became the figurehead of a massive rebellion that began in December 1923. More than half the army, dozens of generals, and not a few provincial governors and strongmen joined this movement. The government (that is, Obregón and Calles) asked for and received the support of organized labor and the peasants. Demonstrably revolutionary governors such as Adalberto Tejeda and Tomás Garrido Canabal, as well as more traditional regional strongmen such as Saturnino Cedillo of San Luis Potosí, mobilized agrarian forces in defense of the regime. In central Mexico some 120,000 armed farmworkers were raised to fight the rebel Delahuertistas.

Once the rebellion was crushed, by March 1924, there were some fifty fewer generals and a smaller, tamer army. In July, the forty-seven-year-old Calles, reputedly more radical and nationalist than Obregón, was elected president for the term 1924-28. He traveled to Europe before his inauguration to study industry and cooperatives in social democratic Germany. Obregón returned to his farm in Sonora, declaring proudly, "I am going to leave by the front door of the National Palace, bathed in the esteem and affection of my people."

One did not have to be a historian to recall another general's "retirement" after one term, to be followed by seven successive reelections.

New president Calles built upon the accomplishments of his predecessor. His regime's alliance with labor was solidified by the appointment of CROM boss Luis Morones as minister of industry, commerce, and labor. Under him, land redistribution was accelerated, more rural schools were built, and the railroad system was aggressively expanded. Reflecting the temper of the times, Calles expanded the economic role of the national state. A central bank, the Bank of Mexico, was created in 1925. The following year, a new National Bank of Agricultural Credit began to finance local and regional cooperative societies. The government built irrigation projects around the country, a new system of highways, and agricultural colleges to modernize that sector.

Presidential power under Calles expanded at the expense of a more professionalized military and increasingly dependent state governments. During Calles's term, the army was reduced to forty thousand soldiers, and twenty-five governors were deposed in fifteen different states. There were also fewer radical leaders at the state and local level, although by now, all the state governments practiced some form of mass politics through labor and agrarian alliances.

Two powers, the United States and the Catholic Church, resisted the expansion of the revolutionary state. Washington began to see the Calles regime as Bolshevik, to the degree that hysteria over "Soviet Mexico" produced a war scare in 1927. As before, the real issue was oil regulation. The church suspended the hearing of mass in 1926 when provocative anticlerical laws were enacted. As a result, militant Catholics rose in the Cristero rebellion in west-central Mexico. By 1927, a savage war was under way that would kill tens of thousands of Mexicans before it ended in 1929.

The return of the caudillo was predictable, although controversial. No revolutionary principle was more sacred than *no reelección*. Supporters argued, however, that the choice was between "Obregón or chaos." In 1927, the constitution was amended to permit one nonconsecutive reelection, and in early 1928, the presidential term was extended to six years. Obregón began his campaign with the support of the National Agrarian Party but without the backing of the CROM and its disappointed boss, who had been a presidential aspirant. Two opposing candidates, both generals, rebelled in the fall of 1927 and were shot to death. The uprising provided an excuse for a murderous purge of political enemies, from Sonora to Chiapas. Obregón survived two attempts on his life before being reelected president in July 1928. "I have proved," he told Calles, tempting fate, "that the presidential palace is not necessarily the antechamber to the tomb." A little more than two weeks later, this "indispensable man" was assassinated by a religious zealot during an open-air banquet.

Obregón, as had Porfirio Díaz decades before, knew how to play politics: how to balance interests and rivalries, and how to conciliate and intimidate regional and national political factions. His abrupt disappearance from the scene led to the sharpening of knives. Supporters of Obregón suspected Calles and his closest ally, Morones. Another revolutionary schism of historic proportions, in the midst of the continuing Cristero rebellion, threatened to erupt. To try to head off disaster, President Calles attempted to unite all the revolutionaries in one common political front: a national revolutionary party.

The most immediate concern was presidential succession. In what would be his last annual Informe, or address to Congress, in September 1928, President Calles declared the end of personalist rule in Mexico and the creation of a "nation of institutions and laws." He prudently resisted the temptation of reelection, stepped down at the end of his term of office in December, and handed the presidency to a politician acceptable to both Obregonistas and Callistas, Emilio Portes Gil. The following year, both factions created a federation of all the revolutionary parties, the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), and nominated the rather obscure ambassador to Brazil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, to be its presidential candidate. His opponent, the Maderista true believer José Vasconcelos, may have actually garnered the most votes. Nevertheless, Ortiz Rubio was the winner and occupied the presidential office. But Calles, now the Jefe Máximo (Supreme Chief) of the Revolution, exercised greater power and authority.

During the period from 1928 to 1934, known as the Maximato, the country saw three presidents wrestle politically with the strongman Calles. Mexico City's residents sometimes wisecracked when they passed Chapultepec Castle, the president's residence, that "the president lives here, but the man who gives the orders lives across the street." Emilio Portes Gil (1928-30) negotiated an end to the Cristero rebellion, improved relations with the United States, and repressed the last serious military revolt against the national government. Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-32) got off to a bad start when he was wounded in an assassination attempt on his inaugural day. He had difficulty accepting the political direction of the Jefe Máximo's men and finally was forced to resign. His successor, Abelardo Rodríguez (1932-34), "the Country Club President," served the remaining two years of Obregón's term and knew how to take orders, even if he did not like it.

During the period of the Maximato, during the Great Depression, Calles became increasingly conservative, whereas the nation's peasants and workers became more radical and assertive. In 1930, in the midst of growing economic crisis, the Jefe Máximo declared agrarian reform a failure and ordered it terminated. Certain governors, Lázaro Cárdenas of Michoacán being one, continued to distribute land and keep the dream alive. But elsewhere, the agrarian

slowdown and hard times in the countryside produced more militant agrarian leagues and parties.

A revitalized agrarian movement from the states grew to become particularly influential within the new revolutionary party. The PNR was formed of state and regional revolutionary parties that were largely agrarian in their makeup. CROM was not invited into the party (because of Morones's close alliance with Calles and his opposition to Obregón's reelection), so Calles had no counterweight to the agrarian influence within the PNR. In the spring of 1933, the agrarian forces from the provinces and within the party made their move. Led by Portes Gil, they established the National Peasant Confederation and issued a manifesto calling for the renewal of agrarian reform and the nomination of their own Lázaro Cárdenas as the party's candidate for president in the 1934 election. The Jefe Máximo chose not to oppose public opinion and the party he'd created, reversed his position on agrarian reform, and went along with the nomination of Cárdenas—his friend and loyal supporter—during the party convention in December 1933.

Although Cárdenas as the official party candidate faced no opposition, he campaigned across the length and breadth of Mexico with an intensity not seen since Madero's aborted campaign in 1909-10. Cárdenas sought more than votes: he wanted a popular mandate for revolution. In July 1934, "the Boy Scout"—so nicknamed by political insiders because of his personal honesty and austerity—was elected president. He took office in December and set about to advance the rebuilding of Mexico.

First, however, there was the problem of the Jefe Máximo. The new president had witnessed firsthand the frustration and humiliation of his immediate predecessor. Cárdenas thus made prudent political alliances and appointments and engineered the retirement or replacement of many army generals and state governors to increase his political support. The new government's acceleration of land reform and toleration of strikes won Cárdenas the backing of agrarian and labor organizations as well as that of important elements in the official party. Thus, when Calles began to criticize agrarian and labor agitation and pressure the government to moderate its policies in mid-1935, Cárdenas purged his cabinet of Calles's most loyal supporters. This action demonstrated that the power of the Jefe Máximo was more apparent than real. In its wake, Cardenistas took over the PNR, Congress, and the governments of fourteen states.

Calles announced his retirement "forever" from politics and went to the United States, but he could not stay away for long. At the end of 1935, he returned to defend his reputation and, he said, the Mexican Revolution. Confrontation was unavoidable. Over the next four months, tension turned to violence between Callistas and Cardenistas. In April 1936, the president had

Calles put on a plane and flown to the United States. "I was exiled," Calles told a reporter, "because I opposed the attempts to implant a dictatorship of the proletariat." Unlike Madero, Zapata, Carranza, Villa, and Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles was not murdered. The Maximato was terminated without bloodshed.

Thereafter, President Cárdenas and his successors would fully control the official party and the government. Cárdenas was brought to office by party leaders but confirmed in power by populist politics. "The Revolution in power" was for the people not simply a figure of speech. It was "a new democracy," as a PNR manifesto stated in 1937, "one in which organized laborers and peasants shall exert a growing influence of political and economic leadership upon the country."

"The Revolution in power" also represented a new kind of government action. Cárdenas argued that, because the government was supported by the working classes, improvement of those groups was its "most pressing obligation." Two currents of reform arose in the 1920s. One stream was social and economic, the effort to create a nation of prosperous peasants and workers, one that controlled its resources and destiny. The other current was cultural, the effort to create the new Mexican man and woman. "To save Mexico for the Mexicans and to save the Mexicans for Mexico," Moisés Sáenz stated in 1926, "is, in synthesis, the Mexican Revolution." These two currents of reform, the cultural revolution and the social and economic one, were in fact two revolutions within the Revolution.

Rebuilding the nation meant, before anything else, "saving" Mexicans: reforming, improving, and liberating men and women, peasants and workers, families and communities, native peoples, and—above all—children, the future of the nation. The revolutionaries of the 1920s and 1930s were the faithful heirs of their liberal grandfathers of the reform era. The nation both generations envisioned was republican, secular, and enlightened. The greatest obstacle to and enemy of this modern Mexico for both remained the country's heterogeneity and the Catholic Church. The revolutionaries embraced the new goal of Mexicanizing the nation. They scorned the Porfirian imitation of European high culture and sought to develop a new respect and pride in Mexican ways. They wanted to blend the disparate ethnic and regional elements of the country into one Mexicanized *patria*.

The cultural revolution, like everything else in Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s, was full of contradictions. The national leadership and certain state regimes often followed different—even opposing—agendas. National policy regarding education and the church evolved and changed course as leaders and regimes changed. Moderate reformers often placed their programs, unknowingly, in the hands of radical administrators and teachers, and radicals were

just as often frustrated by conservatives entrenched in local and provincial posts. Ordinary Mexicans themselves frequently opposed the blandishments, prohibitions, and intrusions of the state. Mexico nevertheless experienced a genuine cultural revolution. There were too many devout revolutionaries at every level throughout the country committed to small acts of transformation as well as reform on a broader and deeper scale for it not to happen. The cultural crusaders of the twentieth century, like the missionary friars of the sixteenth, were extraordinary in their ambition, efforts, and achievements.

The new Mexican citizen would be formed in the government school. "To educate is to redeem," a slogan of the time stated. Educators sought to redeem the child, the adult, the Indian, the woman, the peasant, the worker, and the nation. The program of redemption included not only the three R's, but also hygiene and nutrition, sports and physical fitness, morality and self-control, the fine arts and useful crafts. Agricultural and industrial knowledge and skills, community activism, patriotism, and citizenship were also stressed. This program was called integral or functional education (creating "Action Schools") by its original proponent, the progressive U.S. reformer John Dewey.

Mexico's educational renaissance was at first the result of one remarkable, charismatic man who made education the central issue of reform in the 1920s, José Vasconcelos. At the age of thirty-nine, he returned to Mexico in 1920 with the triumph of the Sonorans and was appointed director of the National University. From that post, he initiated a national literacy campaign, "Each One, Teach One," which recruited volunteer teachers and sparked the imagination of the nation. The following year, he wrote legislation that gave the national government the authority to establish, staff, and maintain schools and created the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) to administer the new system. Vasconcelos, naturally, received the appointment as minister of public education and became the cultural commissar and social engineer of the Revolution.

Vasconcelos attacked the greatest problem head-on. With generous appropriations in the national budget for two years, SEP began to create a nationwide system of rural primary schools. Mobile teacher-training institutes called cultural missions traveled to villages, built schoolhouses, established libraries, and organized school-and community-improvement committees. Teachers were trained in academic subjects, teaching methods, health and nutrition, sports, music, agriculture, the mechanical arts, and more. For the longer term, SEP established a system of rural secondary schools that provided room and board, education, and training free of cost. SEP also published cheap editions of the great books of Western civilization and placed them in thousands of small libraries in villages and towns.

Here is how the assistant minister of SEP described to a U.S. audience in 1926 the role of the rural school and its teachers, the new "soldiers" of

the Revolution: "To integrate Mexico through the rural school—that is, to teach the people of the mountains and of the faraway valleys, the millions of people that are Mexicans but are not yet Mexican, to teach them the love of Mexico and the meaning of Mexico." He continued, "Our little rural school stands for Mexico and represents Mexico in those far-off corners—so many of them that belong to Mexico but are not yet Mexican."

The results were impressive yet frustrating. Before 1920, the education of peasant children was the responsibility either of the states, with most states doing next to nothing, or the church, which in the opinion of revolutionaries, did it badly. By the end of Obregón's term, in late 1925, there were nearly two thousand federal rural primary schools and more than three thousand libraries. Building more remained a priority for subsequent governments; accordingly, the system expanded. By 1936, there were more than eleven thousand rural schools, with fourteen thousand teachers giving instruction to more than 700,000 children. These schools did more than educate: they inoculated children against disease and often fed hungry students a nutritious breakfast.

These schools also welcomed girls, who before had always been secluded at home. During the 1920s and 1930s, the enrollment of girls increased to nearly reach that of boys. The dignity of women was not simply an empty phrase in the official discourse of the period.

The state-level radical governments also expanded the education program. The new regime of the Chiapas Socialist Party, in power from 1925 to 1927, increased the number of state-funded rural primary schools. The poverty of the states' education budgets and the zeal of the national effort are demonstrated by the fact that by 1927, there were nearly twice as many federal as state primary schools in Chiapas. The state also required landowners to provide schools and teachers for the children of their workers. (It was not until 1931 that national legislation required employers to establish similar "Article 123" schools.)

A significant factor in the expansion of rural education in the 1920s was public demand for and support of them. Village leaders, local agrarian movements, and ad hoc school committees petitioned their state and national governments, demanding schools for their children. Localities generally subsidized their schools by building classrooms and supplying furniture. They donated land, animals, tools, and books and sometimes cultivated a communal plot of land to contribute the proceeds to the public school fund. Schools became important centers of village life, as teachers became involved in agrarian petitions, sponsored theater presentations, and organized patriotic ceremonies on national holidays.

Despite these enormous efforts, however, Mexico's illiteracy rate declined only a little in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1937, the Ministry of Public Education

estimated that the country required double the number of rural primary teachers currently at work. Yet a high teacher dropout rate and rapid population growth in what remained a predominantly rural society made the situation harder to beat. Part of the problem was political. Idealistic teachers in rural villages often had to face the violent opposition of local landowners and political bosses who did not want their workforces to be educated, literate, and knowledgeable about the new revolutionary laws and constitution. Teachers became caught up in the agrarian movement and often assisted villages in their petitions to the government for land. As a result, teachers were assaulted, driven away, and even assassinated.

Many of the rural schools were located in indigenous communities where the primary goals were teaching the national language and incorporating Indians into the national culture. Dr. Manuel Puig Casauranc, President Calles's minister of public education, established a residential school in Mexico City for indigenous students from every state. He wanted to educate leaders and train teachers who would return to their communities and build schools. Unfortunately, few graduates wished to give up city life. Native culture was celebrated in public art in the 1920s, but any significant national effort benefiting Mexico's indigenous population would have to wait for the 1930s.

Vasconcelos and his successors created other important educational opportunities and expanded the existing ones. A kindergarten system was established in towns and cities to help care for the children of working mothers. In 1925, a system of public secondary schools was set up. The ministry also opened night schools, prevocational schools for young adults, technical and vocational schools, and rural agricultural schools for young peasant farmers.

In 1921, Vasconcelos established a department of fine arts within SEP to encourage and support the plastic arts, music, and literature. At the same time, he commissioned artists to paint public walls to reflect his philosophical idealism and refine the public's esthetic appreciation. However, the mural painters had a different agenda. In 1922, David Alfaro Siqueiros drew up a Social, Political, and Esthetic Declaration for the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors to guide the new work. "We proclaim," the declaration read, "that this being the moment of social transition from a decrepit to a new order, the makers of beauty must invest their greatest efforts in the aim of materializing an art valuable to the people."

José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera produced the most well-known and didactic murals. Rivera's work particularly glorified and romanticized the Revolution as a peasants' and workers' movement. His biographer, Bertram D. Wolfe, observed that Rivera "painted what the Revolution should be, what it should become." Orozco, on the other hand, as Wolfe noted in

The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, "has painted what the Revolution had been, its brutality, its senseless pattern of demagoguery and betrayal." Both these painters and the many others who participated had one thing in common, however: the glorification of Mexico, its people, customs, and history. The Mexican mural renaissance continued through the 1920s and 1930s, covering walls in many of Mexico's most important buildings—the National Palace, the Ministry of Public Education building, the Palace of Fine Arts. These powerful images of a revolutionary people were reproduced and disseminated throughout the nation, creating a powerful cultural nationalism that resonates still, as discussed further in Chapter 17.

The muralists often portrayed the Catholic Church and its clergy as one of the reactionary forces blocking progress generation after generation. Revolutionaries had blamed the church for siding with General Victoriano Huerta against Madero in 1913 and further restricted the institution and clergy in the Constitution of 1917. They sought once and for all to break up the religious monopoly held by the Catholic Church and to lead the Mexican people away from conservatism, bigotry, intolerance, superstition, and fanaticism.

Article 130 of the revolutionary charter sought to remove any remaining religious influence in politics but said nothing about labor organization. This oversight made it possible for a number of Catholic labor unions to arise, which united in the National Catholic Confederation of Labor in 1922. This backdoor entrance of the church into populist politics was unacceptable to the Sonorans, however, and especially to CROM. The church also became involved in agrarian disputes and conflicts, with priests often backing landowners and counseling villagers to join various leagues and petition for land. In many communities, the church and state confronted each other in the guise of priest and teacher. Conflict between the "two majesties" therefore became nearly inevitable.

As is often the case in conflicts between powerful forces, each side believed it was being provoked by the other. CROM thugs attacked Catholic unions and dynamited churches while the government turned a blind eye. In 1923, a massive pilgrimage was organized to Guanajuato to crown Jesus Christ the king of Mexico. The government responded by expelling the papal ambassador, who was present at the ceremony. Catholic militancy grew with the formation of the Catholic Association of Mexican Youth. In the first year of Calles's term, CROM leader Luis Morones instigated the formation of a rival church, the Mexican National Orthodox Apostolic Catholic Church, whose first patriarch, Joaquín Pérez, was a married man and a Mason.

Revolutionary anticlericalism became most severe and systematic in certain states. There, governors appropriated church buildings and converted them into libraries, schools, and union halls. They often closed church schools, expelling

priests and bishops who protested. Socialist symbols were put up in place of traditional Catholic icons, sometimes even on church buildings. The most radically liberal and anticlerical Jacobin regime was Tomás Garrido Canabal's, in Tabasco, where anticlerical laws prohibited the exhibition of any religious image, required the marriage of every priest, and ultimately closed every church in the state.

At the national level, church/state relations came to an impasse in 1926. When the archbishop of Guadalajara publicly condemned the Constitution of 1917 during a building crisis, President Calles expelled two hundred foreign priests, as well as the new papal envoy, and pushed through Congress a new penal code for "religious crimes." The National League for Religious Defense, a new lay organization, organized an economic boycott to pressure the government to revoke the anticlerical laws. In the end, the church hierarchy suspended all religious services. The Catholic Church went on strike.

Even before this showdown, peasant rebels in the mountains of Jalisco and neighboring states in west-central Mexico began making war on the government in the name of "Christ the King." These Cristero rebels joined the now underground National League for Religious Defense and, by 1927, had organized a massive peasant uprising. The Cristero rebellion lasted three years, consumed nearly half the federal budget, and claimed perhaps seventy thousand lives. One repercussion was the assassination of President-elect Obregón in 1928. When the government concluded that military repression was not succeeding, President Portes Gil negotiated a settlement in 1929 that opened the churches in exchange for nonenforcement of the offending laws.

The Cristero rebellion turned out to be only one battle in a longer war. When the National Revolutionary Party was organized in 1929, this made a new vehicle available for waging cultural revolution. During his tenure as party chief, Portes Gil instituted a "cultural hour" every Sunday when revolutionaries in every village, ejido, and union hall would gather to enjoy and learn from cultural programs. These included folk music, patriotic stories, presentations on child care, and other topics of interest to the community. These Sunday programs and others throughout the week would be broadcast by radio to the entire country by new PNR-owned stations. The party was in effect unwilling to concede any ground to the church even on Sunday.

Like many other revolutionaries of his generation, Lázaro Cárdenas was a moralist who detested what he considered the bad and corrupt habits of his people. As president, he conducted an anti-alcohol campaign and wanted to institute national prohibition, which had recently been tried in the United States. He prevented the manufacture and sale of dice and playing cards and banned gambling. During his term, the casinos on the northern border and the red-light districts of Mexico City were put out of business.

The cultural revolution begun in the 1920s shifted into high gear in the 1930s. In 1934, the Jefe Máximo, Plutarco Calles, proclaimed in a widely publicized speech given in Guadalajara that "we must enter and conquer the minds of the children, the minds of the young, because they do and they must belong to the Revolution." The official party followed his lead later that year with its Six-Year Plan, which stated that primary and secondary education should be based "in the orientations and postulates of the socialist doctrine that the Mexican Revolution supports." This plan sought the elimination of all private schools by the end of the six-year period.

This socialist education program was the brainchild of Narciso Bassols, the SEP minister from 1931 to 1934, and the first Marxist appointed to a cabinet post. Bassols was encouraged and supported by radical teachers' unions, some radical state governments, and the revitalized agrarian movement. He wanted Mexican education to provide a rational explanation of the world and, thus, combat religious obscurantism and fanaticism, but also instill in children a collectivist ethic and thereby bring an end to the exploitation of man by man.

Congress amended the constitution to include socialist education in December 1934. President Cárdenas gave the job of implementing it to Ignacio García Téllez, the new SEP minister. The new so-called socialist schools were in fact the old Action Schools, but now with an ideological mission. "Our socialistic education attempts to inculcate in our children a true sympathy for the working classes and for the ideals of the Revolution," Ramón Beteta wrote in 1937. "We want to convince them of the benefits of land distribution and the protection of labor; we want them to realize the necessity of protecting the country's natural resources and to appreciate the dignity of work." New textbooks emphasized agrarianism and the dignity of labor, a materialist approach to history, and the new Mexicanized national identity. Building on the efforts of the 1920s, teachers put particular emphasis on replacing the traditional religious calendar with a new patriotic and revolutionary calendar of national holidays celebrating the great men and women—revolutionaries all—of Mexican history.

The very word "socialist," when applied to education, provoked considerable protest and opposition on the part of social conservatives, whether upper-class or peasant, new fascist groups, and, of course, the church and clergy. Prominent clerics characterized socialist education as a "Jewish-Masonic plan." Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores stated that no Catholic could be a member of the National Revolutionary Party. Parents who sent their children to socialist schools, the church threatened, could be excommunicated. In 1935, the hierarchy issued a pastoral letter declaring that the church should "organize and direct the integral life of man by means of its moral doctrines in all spheres of human life." Laymen of the church were encouraged to form

and did form associations of Catholic action such as the Union of Mexican Catholics, the Catholic Association of Mexican Youth, and others, and created a united front to oppose "atheistic laicism and absurd positivism." The ultimate objective, church leaders declared, was "the conquest of [the nation's] legitimate liberties."

In several states, anticlericalism reached a fever pitch. The governor of Chiapas closed every church in the state, expelled the bishop and every priest, and organized public bonfires to destroy religious objects. A new state law there prohibited the inclusion of the names of saints in place names, which meant that the town of San Bartolomé de los Llanos, as only one example of many, became Venustiano Carranza. In seventeen states, there were no priests at all. The militant anticlericalism of Garrido Canabal's state of Tabasco shifted to Mexico City in 1935, as the governor joined the cabinet of the new president. "Red Shirts," members of the radical group *Bloque de Jóvenes Revolucionarios*, from Tabasco set up headquarters in the capital and attacked, and in one incident killed, Catholics coming out of church.

Mexico was close to having another Cristero war. But President Cárdenas, although anticlerical himself, had no intention, he stated, "of falling into the error of previous administrations." He took forceful action against the Red Shirts in Mexico City and Tabasco. In 1936, within the hotbed of Cristero militancy, the state of Jalisco, Cárdenas declared that the "fundamental aspects" of the program of the Mexican Revolution were social and economic in character. He argued that "it is no concern of the government to undertake antireligious campaigns." When the government's policy of conciliation was matched by the church, tensions subsided. In 1938, the nation celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as thousands of pilgrims gathered in Mexico City.

The deep and apparent religiosity of Mexican women convinced many male revolutionaries in the 1920s and 1930s that instituting woman suffrage would advance "reactionary" interests. A small but persistent women's movement that had emerged from the Revolution was campaigning for the right to vote. However, from 1920 to 1934, only four states granted women the vote—Yucatán in 1922, San Luis Potosí in 1923, Chiapas in 1925, and Tabasco in 1934—two of which later revoked it.

"Women must organize," Lázaro Cárdenas stated in a campaign speech, "so that the home shall cease to be looked upon as a prison for them." And organize they did. In 1934, the Revolutionary Feminist Party supported Cárdenas; a year later the new president incorporated the party into the PNR. This step started moving. Several states then granted woman suffrage, and the PNR granted women full membership as well as the vote in party primaries.

Pressured by a hunger strike staged outside his home, Cárdenas agreed in 1937 to send an amendment to Congress providing women the vote. The amendment passed both chambers in 1938 and was sent to the states for ratification. After all twenty-eight states approved it late in the year, the constitutional amendment and a new national election law were placed before Congress for final approval in 1939. But there the initiative languished. By 1939, a growing conservative opposition to the government and the official party, and the start of the next presidential campaign, combined to produce second thoughts within the ranks of the revolutionaries. The influence of President Cárdenas, now a lame duck, was fading fast. The old concern about Mexican women's supposed innate conservatism in the middle of a crucial, tight election led to legislative inaction.

Less controversial than socialist education and woman suffrage was the Cárdenista policy and ideology regarding Indians called *indigenismo*, or indigenism. The folk and cultural nationalism that became more influential in the 1920s flew in the face of the earlier Mexican objective of "civilizing" the Indians and turning them into Mexicans. "Revolutionary Mexico," Moisés Sáenz noted, "has developed a new conscience about the Indian." Yet old prejudices faded slowly. In Chiapas, one of the states with the largest native populations, the state Department of Indigenous Protection initiated in 1934 a "pants campaign" to force the Indians to abandon their traditional costume and wear trousers. Despite regional holdouts such as Chiapas, by the 1930s, revolutionary intellectuals believed that government policy should promote the social, economic, and spiritual emancipation of the Indians while preserving the best characteristics and habits of native culture.

Although the Cárdenas administration created a new national Department of Indian Affairs in December 1935 to advance the new policy of indigenism, most action to support that goal came from other agencies. Land reform benefiting Indian regions, for instance, did not begin until Cárdenas ordered it. In the new Cardenista state government of Chiapas, Indian policy was revolutionized. The state department organized the region's migrant coffee workers into the Syndicate of Indigenous Workers, which ended labor abuses and raised wages. In the Yaqui region, Cárdenas and the state of Sonora recognized the authority of native governors, thus ending colonial rule by the army.

Indigenous education programs remained with the Ministry of Public Education. In the early 1930s, SEP established regional Centers of Indigenous Education, in effect residential colleges, to educate boys and girls in the mid- to late-teen years. In 1937, the ministry created the Department of Indigenous Education, which supervised thirty-three regional centers. As in the rural primary schools, integral education—learning by doing—was the preferred

method in these centers. There students built their own houses, tended a garden, formed cooperatives, learned different arts and crafts, dances, songs, and games, and used machinery and modern tools. Graduates were expected to return to their villages and put in practice the lessons learned.

Mexico's cultural revolution of two decades, its experiment in social engineering, outraged a significant segment of society, while many of its most committed proponents were disappointed by the survival of the church and capitalism. And yet a new Mexico emerged. By the 1940s, most young people had learned or were learning how to read and write. For the first time, reading was no longer the privilege of just a tiny elite or even the small middle class. Mexicans gained a new understanding and appreciation of their country. The Frenchified Mexico of the earlier Porfiriato, a shallow imitation that rejected its own people and traditions, was Mexicanized. Great murals now portrayed and gloried in a multiethnic nation. Mexican arts and crafts, dance, and music were discovered, appreciated, and shared with the rest of the world. In many respects, the goal of forging the nation that had long antedated the Revolution was largely achieved as a result of the cultural revolution.

Rebuilding the nation also meant raising the standard of living of ordinary Mexicans and giving them a real stake in their own country. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, revolutionaries were less in agreement about the means and ends of the social revolution than about those of the cultural revolution. The Constitution of 1917, itself a compromise, inspired different visions. As a result, two rather different social revolutions competed for ascendancy in the states and the capital.

In the 1920s, policy at the national level was directed by men from northern Mexico. Their attitudes reflected their region's understanding of Mexico's problems and the Revolution's promises. The northern frontier was a land of hardy individualists, colonists and frontiersmen, and small ranchers who admired and aspired to become *hacendados*, not a land of dense peasant communities. For northerners, the goal of the Revolution was conciliation of class interests, balancing the rights and interests of peasants and landowners, villages and haciendas, workers and employers. To the Sonorans, Mexico's "land problem" was agriculture (concerned with productivity) more than agrarian (concerned with land tenure and equality). The goal for them was to modernize agriculture and raise productivity and in this way better the lives of farmers and farmworkers. Land reform was seen as a way to correct past injustices or simply as a political necessity in regions where the peasants were militant and mobilized.

By the 1930s, the national leadership had passed to men from central Mexico who had a quite different understanding of the nation and its revolution. Their Mexico was what has often been called the "old Mexico" of high plateaus and mountain valleys populated by peasant and Indian villages often under

the domination of, or in conflict with, haciendas. Here, the means and ends of the Revolution were more radical: the well-being of villages required the reduction, and many argued the destruction, of the hacienda system. Land reform therefore was central to the revolutionary project, with the *ejido* seen as the future of agriculture and rural society.

On one issue the two different regional perspectives tended to converge. Mexico should be master in its own house and economically independent, they agreed. Mexico's workers, employed largely by foreign-owned enterprises, should also be secure in their rights and free from exploitation. Thus, obtaining the government's backing for labor rights and organization was part and parcel of the nation's struggle for independence. In this respect, the constitution was perfectly clear: the nation would own and control its resources, and require that foreign enterprises strictly adhere to Mexican law. Workers possessed the right to organize and strike, to earn a minimum wage and work an eight-hour day, to receive a share of profits, and much more. The objective was clear—but so was the obstacle. The United States and Britain both opposed the revolutionary constitution's redefinition of property and labor rights, and pressured the Mexican government not to enforce them.

Carranza's agrarian law of January 6, 1915 (later incorporated into the Constitution of 1917), set the basic guidelines for land reform. Free villages could seek restitution of lands that had been taken from them in the past. Villages with insufficient land could apply for a land grant, whereas those that had received land but still did not have enough could petition for more. Within these guidelines, however, in the 1920s, the various state laws and governors often controlled the speed and extent of land reform, because the process began with the state agrarian commissions. The more conservative state congresses and governors wrote agrarian laws that protected all but the most gigantic estates and exempted lands devoted to export crops.

In areas of intense Catholicism, priests actively opposed agrarian organization and reform. The more radical state governments pushed the process to the limits of the law and redistributed the greatest part of the land. The landowners resisted land reform by all manner of imaginative methods, such as obtaining stop orders from judges, controlling village leadership, dividing properties among family members, and preempting reform by giving local peasants unneeded acreage.

Agrarian reform depended on pressure from below as well as leadership from above. In regions where peasants had organized and fought during the armed revolution, primarily in central Mexico, agrarian activism continued; local politicians had to react or face considerable opposition. On the other hand, where peasants were loyal clients of a hacienda, reform could likely be sidelined. The considerable regional variations of reform during the 1920s are

revealed by the 1930 census. Extensive agrarian reform was found in states with peasant activism and radical governors (Morelos, Tlaxcala, Guerrero, Aguascalientes, Hidalgo, Mexico, San Luis Potosí, Puebla, and Yucatán), whereas there was virtually no reform in the states lacking these conditions (Coahuila, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Tabasco, and Baja California).

Agrarian reform was not simply a legal, bureaucratic, and political process, but a violent struggle that continued in many localities for years on end. In the 1920s and 1930s, rural society remained a battlefield of the Mexican Revolution. Landowners in defense of the "sacred" principle of private property frequently had agrarian leaders murdered. Haciendas organized armed "white guards" in the name of defense, and peasants involved in agrarian organizations were sometimes hanged from roadside trees as a warning. The peasants fought back, burning haciendas and killing landowners. In several states, radical governors armed peasant militias. The opposing forces often met at election time to fight for control of local voting stations.

Presidential leadership was important to land reform, because a national agrarian commission had to approve grants provisionally extended by state commissions. Obregón made sure that the Zapatista movement, a peasant insurgency led by Emiliano Zapata, would not rise again by distributing one quarter of the land in Morelos to its villages. The agrarian reform process viewed by each presidential administration from 1915 to 1934 demonstrates just how important national leadership was. Interim president de la Huerta, for instance, distributed almost as much land in six months as President Carranza did in five years.

"A new Mexico is being built and the redistribution of land is the foundation stone of [it]," Ramón P. de Negri wrote in 1924. "We are laying it with bleeding hands and in great stress, but we are laying it, and digging it so deep into the hearts of the nation that this work of the revolution will endure forever." By 1934, after nearly two decades of land reform, the state and national governments had redistributed approximately 18 million acres to 800,000 peasants and 4,000 ejidos. When this record is compared with the overall need of the peasantry, however, it reveals how much remained to be done. Only about 10 percent of the cultivated land had been distributed to the new ejido sector. More than 2 million peasants—villagers and resident farmworkers—remained without land. Approximately two-thirds of the great estates and plantations, the latifundios, were undisturbed. This seemingly modest accomplishment nevertheless was radical in the eyes of landowners, as demonstrated by the considerable bloodshed that accompanied it. The once powerful hacienda system was no longer functioning in some regions and localities, and was threatened or in decline nearly everywhere. Where it did take place, successful reform inspired villagers elsewhere to organize and petition. Thus, the dramatic

expansion of land reform by Cárdenas after 1934 would not have been possible without the struggles and achievements that had come before.

Although the Sonorans did redistribute land, they placed most of their faith and effort in assisting privately owned agriculture. Calles established the National Agricultural Credit Bank in 1926, most of whose funds were absorbed by large landowners in the north. (In 1926, the largest recipient of credit was the Sonoran chickpea farmer Alvaro Obregón.) The Calles regime was particularly energetic in building dams and irrigation works that almost exclusively benefited large-scale commercial agriculture in northern Mexico. Other public works projects, such as road building and railroad repair and extension, were also intended to promote commercial agriculture and increase exports.

The economic crisis produced by the Great Depression, combined with Calles's order to terminate agrarian reform and President Ortiz Rubio's slowdown of it, provoked a revitalized agrarian movement in the early 1930s. Pressure from below began to produce modifications at the top. In 1931, the National Agricultural Credit Bank was reorganized to assist cooperative societies made up of ejidos and small farmers. Credit was extended to cooperatives for seed, fertilizer, and farm machinery. In some states, contrary to national policy, agrarian reform was stepped up, but overall the pace of reform in 1933 reached the lowest level since 1922. At this point, the agrarian forces went into action.

Several prominent agrarians and leading figures in the official party—Emilio Portes Gil, Graciano Sánchez, Enrique Flores Magón, Saturnino Cedillo, and Marte Gómez among them—came together. With the agrarian leagues of Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Michoacán, Chihuahua, Tlaxcala, and other states, they organized the Mexican Peasant Confederation (CCM) in the spring of 1933. The CCM pushed the presidential candidacy of Cárdenas and intervened in the discussions just beginning for a Six-Year Plan to be presented at the PNR's national convention in December. At the same time, it also began to organize a Cardenista "peasant bloc" in Congress.

The effort paid off. Even Calles came to see which way the wind was blowing and declared the need to resume agrarian reform in 1933. At the party convention, Cárdenas was nominated. The Six-Year Plan agreed upon included a call for more land redistribution under greater national supervision. Even before the end of 1933, Congress amended Article 27 of the constitution to remove any judicial interference in the agrarian reform process. In early 1934, President Abelardo Rodríguez created a new, autonomous Agrarian Department, which immediately accelerated land distribution. In March, a new agrarian code was approved that revolutionized the reform process. For the first time, resident hacienda workers were given the right to petition for land, whereas lands

producing export crops were brought under the purview of agrarian reform. Reform was simplified and centralized as well, giving the president new powers to push reform. Two years later, Congress gave the president the authority to expropriate private property and enterprises.

During 1935, Cárdenas's first year in office, land grants quadrupled. His most dramatic agrarian actions came after the termination of the Maximato in 1936. Starting with the Laguna region in northern Mexico, an area of large cotton estates, the president began to expropriate the richest zones of commercial agriculture in the country. Three hundred communal ejidos on 600,000 acres were established in the Laguna, benefiting thirty thousand peasants. Once they had organized cooperative societies, the new National Ejidal Credit Bank extended financing for hundreds of tractors and other farm implements. Similar actions followed in the henequen plantation zone of Yucatán (August 1937), in the Yaqui Valley in the state of Sonora (December 1937), on the Cusi family haciendas in Michoacán and the sugar plantations of Sinaloa (1938), and in the coffee plantation zone of Chiapas (April 1940).

"We have chosen the ejido," Ramón Beteta, one of Cárdenas's ideologues, stated in 1935, "as the center of our rural economy." During the course of the Cárdenas administration some 50 million acres were distributed to nearly 800,000 peasants. More than 11,000 new ejidos came into being. Land grants were accompanied by the formation of producers' and consumers' cooperatives and the extension of agricultural credit. By 1940, nearly half of Mexico's cultivated land was held by 20,000 ejidos, the number of whose peasant members exceeded 1.6 million. Nine hundred of these were communal ejidos. The great hacienda, an institution that had evolved over four centuries, no longer existed. The basis of a new rural economy was in place, with a new ethic: "We must always keep in mind," wrote Beteta, "that it is people and their happiness and not the production of wealth that matters."

Agrarian reform attacked what was largely a Mexican institution owned by Mexican citizens. On the other hand, the revolutionary constitution's provisions regarding industrial capital and labor for the most part targeted foreign-owned enterprises, which until then in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America had enjoyed privileged access and treatment. Mexico's mining, petroleum, and textile industries, as well as its roads and public utilities, were all foreign owned and managed, with the workers, of course, being Mexican.

The rather weak and precarious government of the Sonoran state postponed real enforcement of the constitution's provisions regarding subsoil rights, so as to avoid conflict with the United States. Nationalists throughout the country dearly wished to apply Article 27 retroactively to the U.S. and British petroleum companies and thus transform those oil wells from company property to temporary concessions granted by the state. A 1925 petroleum law threatening

such action led the U.S. government first to declare a crisis and talk of intervention, and then to negotiate a Mexican retreat.

Empowering workers through unionization and putting the state on the side of labor provided nationalists with a less directly confrontational—and therefore less dangerous—approach to undermining the power of foreign enterprise. Thus, in a country that had had only a small working class and an even smaller labor movement in 1917, the position of labor in politics and the economy would change dramatically, but not immediately. Carranza undermined his alliance with urban labor, an alliance founded solely on political expediency, which prompted CROM to support Obregón's candidacy in 1920. The Sonorans found this new alliance quite useful and backed labor once they were in power.

During the 1920s, unions became free to organize and strike without government opposition or repression for the first time. With government backing and favorable appointments in relevant offices, CROM's membership rapidly expanded. Prolabor conciliation and arbitration boards helped solidify the position of CROM unions by favorable settlements with employers and let them thereby raise wages. In 1925, CROM obtained the first collective labor contract in Mexican history. By 1926, the zenith of its influence, more than two thousand individual unions and seventy-five labor federations (representing two-thirds of Mexican workers) were following Luis Morones and his "official" labor movement. No labor movement in any other country, noted Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor, has been able to strike an equilibrium between capital and labor as quickly as in Mexico.

Nevertheless, CROM never succeeded in unifying the labor movement, despite great effort. Morones's philosophy of class conciliation under state supervision and his policies of support for the government and participation in party politics were contrary to the prominent anarchosindicalist tradition of Mexican labor. In 1921, the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) assumed that mantle, having considerable strength among textile and petroleum workers. There were also Catholic and Communist, along with independent, unions scattered across the country. All of these felt CROM's pressure tactics—including violence as well as official disapproval and sometimes repression—and thus paid a price for their independence. In the 1920s, the violence of rival mobsters in America's streets had a Mexican counterpart in union gangsterism.

Despite considerable government support for labor and the CROM, Morones soon came to feel that Obregón had not kept his side of the bargain to earn CROM's election support. Congress neither approved a comprehensive federal labor code nor created an independent ministry of labor. Legislation implementing the guarantees of the constitution was left to the states, which

produced a considerable variation. By 1924, Obregón and Morones were publicly trading insults, but the state-labor alliance survived and even thrived. In that year, CROM and Morones jumped on the Calles presidential bandwagon and became the greatest supporters of the new president, who returned the favor.

Calles's term, from 1924 to 1928, was CROM's golden age. Morones was appointed minister of industry, commerce, and labor, and became the second most powerful man in Mexico. His influence could be seen in the 1925 petroleum law as well as in anticlerical legislation that was passed in 1926. He called in federal troops in 1926-27 to repress a strike by railroad workers, who belonged to the country's largest independent union. Morones made many powerful enemies, sowing the seeds of his own downfall and CROM's. No doubt wanting to succeed Calles himself, he opposed the reelection of Obregón. When the caudillo was assassinated in 1928, most Obregonistas believed Morones to be the intellectual author of the act. For self-preservation, Calles distanced himself from Morones.

The period of the Maximato witnessed not only the decline of CROM but also a rupture of the alliance between the state and organized labor. CROM and its affiliated political party, the Mexican Labor Party, did not join the new official revolutionary party, the PNR. President Portes Gil, a noted enemy of CROM, shifted government's favor to the independent unions. Meanwhile, the depression wiped out the wage gains of the 1920s and increased unemployment. It was in this unpropitious period that Congress finally passed a comprehensive labor code regulating Article 123 of the constitution.

Article 123 provides for the balancing of labor and business rights and responsibilities, and the federal labor law of 1931 was faithful to its provisions. In nearly seven hundred specific articles, this law superseded all state labor laws. It confirmed the constitutional principles of compulsory trade unionism, collective bargaining, the right to strike, and the prohibition of child labor. It also provided for accident compensation, the minimum wage, and much more. It created a central board of conciliation and arbitration and fifteen regional federal boards to settle disputes between employers and laborers. The Department of Labor was made an independent agency two years later.

Although the 1931 law proved to be one of the most advanced labor codes in the world, it was passed against the wishes of the labor movement, as well as Mexico's business establishment. For one thing, the federal law was not as favorable to labor as were many state laws. It also confirmed the 1920s trend of giving the national government tremendous power over unions, strikes, and settlements. Because the governments of the Maximato period were more conservative, so were its settlements. The manager of an important U.S. company in Mexico City summed up the problem for labor in 1932: "We don't worry

much about the boards of conciliation and arbitration, as long as we stand with the government." (There were, however, exceptions. When workers were fired without compensation by the British-owned Tolteca Cement Company in 1931, the state of Hidalgo expropriated the factory and compensated the company. A few years later ownership was transferred to a workers' cooperative.)

In general, however, labor lost ground during the Maximato. As CROM declined and new rivals appeared, the movement fragmented further. A new labor central governing body emerged in 1933, the General Confederation of Workers and Peasants of Mexico (CGOCM), under the leadership of a former CROM official and Marxist intellectual, Vicente Lombardo Toledano. The new labor movement that was evolving in the 1930s was, with only a few exceptions, more combative and politically independent. Any renewed alliance between the state and labor appeared unlikely, however, because CROM, the CGT, and the CGOCM did not support the candidacy of Cárdenas in 1934.

Conditions favoring a new alliance were nonetheless developing. The PNR's Six-Year Plan, employing the language of class conflict, called for greater state intervention and national control of the economy. When Cárdenas took office, he gave labor free rein, after which a wave of officially approved strikes hit the foreign-owned basic industries. From 15 strikes in 1933, the number increased to 202 in 1934, and to more than 600 by 1935. It was this "unnecessary agitation" and "marathon of radicalism," as Jefe Máximo Calles phrased it, that led him to challenge Cárdenas in mid-1935.

At this point the electricians' union began to organize a united labor front in support of the government. By February 1936, the participating unions, which now included Lombardo Toledano's CGOCM and numerous independent as well as Communist unions, created the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). Under Lombardo Toledano's leadership, the CTM endorsed the policies of the Cárdenas government and soon began to participate with the PNR in electoral politics. The government for its part favored the CTM with important appointments, subsidies, and support for wage demands. A new alliance was forged.

With a nearly united labor movement and a supportive government, labor activism began to show real gains after 1936. Wages rose as new contracts were signed and the government implemented the constitutional guarantee of a mandatory Sunday wage. Strikes became the wedge for Cárdenas to undermine foreign economic power. A general strike of farmworkers and employer obstinacy in the Laguna region gave him an opportunity to expropriate the lands of the three large foreign companies dominating the region. The same thing took place later in the U.S.-dominated Mexicali Valley of Baja California. Then, labor problems led to the nationalization of the railroads in 1937 and, nearly a year after that, the establishment of worker management.

In other cases around the country, whether in sugar mills, mines, or factories, the government instituted worker control through cooperatives.

The most momentous labor dispute occurred in 1938 in the petroleum industry. Repeated strikes in that sector put the issue in the hands of a local federal arbitration board, which ruled in favor of a significant raise in wages and improved social benefits. But the oil companies refused to pay the increased wages and appealed to the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board. When that board ruled in favor of the workers and the companies still balked, Cárdenas acted. The president announced to the nation on March 18, 1938, the expropriation of the single most powerful and valuable foreign sector in Mexico. The oil properties were turned over to worker control. At a mass rally in Mexico City placards hailed "the economic independence of Mexico." This moment was, unquestionably, the high point of the Mexican Revolution.

"And so Mexico is giving the world its great lesson!" a popular ballad about the expropriation proclaimed. "History is being redeemed through our Revolution!" By the late 1930s, Mexico's "great lesson" included not only the reappropriation of the nation's land and resources, but also the realization of a new kind of economy, "a more humane and just system of economic relations," as Ramón Beteta put it, "by means of the intelligent intervention of a government with working-class interests."

To consolidate his reforms and permanently empower the peasants and workers, Cárdenas reorganized the PNR. He transformed Calles's party of regional factions and ideological currents into an organization that fully incorporated the populist masses. The Confederation of Mexican Workers would form the foundation of the labor sector. To incorporate the peasants into this movement, Cárdenas established the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) out of the older CCM. Party membership was collective: all members of affiliated ejidos and unions automatically became members of the new official party. In addition to its labor and peasant sectors, the party included the military and a popular unit composed largely of state employees.

The 1938 party convention formalized these changes and decided upon a new name: the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM). With 4 million members, the PRM was a genuine mass party. In 1938, the political nation began to look toward the 1940 election. The power of lame-duck president Cárdenas was slowly dissolving. He did not help himself by declaring that he would not intervene in the electoral process. His opponents started to organize, politics took center stage, and the reform momentum slowed. By the late 1930s, Mexicans realized that the nation was coming to a critical juncture.

Cardenismo revived the Revolution and, in so doing, activated its enemies. To conservative leader and former revolutionary intellectual Manuel Gómez Morín, "the situation in Mexico by 1938 had become intolerable." It was also

intolerable to a growing right wing, supported by many fervent Catholics and powerful business interests. In 1937, the National Sinarquista Union, a mass-based Catholic movement and an offshoot of the Cristero rebellion that admired Spanish fascism, was created to reverse the Mexican Revolution. Two years later, more moderate Catholic activists with support from big business formed the National Action Party under the leadership of Gómez Morín. The right wing also included an anti-Semitic fascist movement known as the Anti-Communist Revolutionary Party, which was led by a former PNR chief and one of the country's most decorated generals. There were also the Mexican Falange, Gold Shirts, Brown Shirts, and "fifth column" German-dominated Mexican National Socialist Party. José Vasconcelos, still one of Mexico's best-known intellectuals, wanted Mexico to get in step with the "direction of history," which he believed was indicated by Germany's Adolf Hitler.

In the late 1930s, the world witnessed a revolution that had been destroyed by a mobilized right. The Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 had been a confrontation between social and cultural revolution on the one side and uncompromising counterrevolution supported by the Spanish Catholic church and Europe's fascist dictatorships on the other. The revolution was defeated by a right-wing coalition of monarchists, militarists, and fascists named the Spanish Traditionalist Falange, led by General Francisco Franco. Cárdenas had given material support to the revolutionary republic. When it was defeated, he welcomed to Mexico thousands of Spanish refugees. The triumph of Franco's nationalists was, however, applauded in conservative Mexican circles and even viewed there as a precursor to what was seen as the inevitable defeat of Cárdenas. If ever there was an example of extreme ideological polarization and the violence it can generate, the Spanish Civil War was it, and Cárdenas knew that.

In the last two years of his term, during the slow death of the Spanish republic, Cárdenas moderated his course. The pace of land reform slowed. His administration created the Office of Small Property to protect small landowners. In the wake of the March 1938 petroleum expropriation, Cárdenas asked labor to reduce strike activity so as not to further disrupt production. Militant anticlericalism came to an end and socialist education was put on hold, although it remained official policy. Moderation did not mean abandonment of the Revolution, however. Cárdenas believed that the PRM would continue the course of reform favoring peasants and workers. He left in place, he would write, "a revolutionary instrument," a powerful one indeed, "with which Mexico could continue its liberation."

True to his word, in the 1940 race President Cárdenas stayed out of electoral politics. Center-right politicians in the PRM organized the candidacy of Cárdenas's defense minister, General Manuel Avila Camacho, and expertly

gained the support of the CTM and the CNC. The party thus bypassed the genuine Cardenista candidate, the radical Francisco Múgica, and backed the candidate of moderation, conciliation, and national unity. Avila Camacho campaigned on a promise "to consolidate the gains of the Cárdenas regime."

General Juan Andreu Almazán, another military man who represented, as best he could, the diverse interests of the conservative opposition to Cárdenas, opposed the official party candidate. His Revolutionary Party of National Unification received the support of Catholics, small landowners, the urban middle class, peasants unhappy with official agrarianism, and more than a few labor unions and workers. Because of Almazán's substantial popularity with peasants and workers, the PRM conducted an intense—and dirty—campaign. There were violent clashes between followers of the two candidates that continued even on election day in July 1940. Cárdenas never campaigned for Avila Camacho. He wanted the election to be free and democratic, but of course every department head, governor, and local official was behind the formal candidate. The revolutionary family would not give up power. Avila Camacho was declared the winner by an overwhelming majority, although it is possible that Almazán actually won more votes.

The Avila Camacho government (1940-46), although publicly committed to consolidating the gains of the Cárdenas regime, in fact guided Mexico in a different direction. "The Gentleman President," so called because he was courteous and well dressed, in the name of national unity and class conciliation, ended "rational education" and the socialist schools where it was practiced, looked the other way as church schools multiplied, and shifted school construction to the cities. In 1943, however, Jaime Torres Bodet took over as education minister and embarked upon a new literacy campaign that included bilingual education in Indian learning centers, funding for state instruction centers, and new cultural missions to remote villages. By 1946, the nation's commitment to the principle of education for all Mexicans was undisputed.

On the other hand, the nation's commitment to landless peasants wavered. By 1943, the distribution of land was reduced by 50 percent; by 1945, it was reduced by more than 90 percent, compared with Cárdenas's last year in office. The collective ejidos were starved of necessary financing, and wherever possible, the land was divided into individual parcels. Public policy, investment needs, and changing technology all favored private farms and commercial agriculture.

In 1943, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture established the Mexican Agricultural Project, which promoted hybrid grains and modern technology. The resulting "Green Revolution" dramatically favored commercial farmers (whose wheat yields, in time, became the highest

in Latin America), but the project essentially bypassed Mexico's peasant farmers (whose average corn yields remained the lowest).

The Cardenista vision of a rural Mexico of prosperous ejidos was replaced by a new government policy favoring industrialization. The entry of the United States into World War II in late 1941, followed by Mexico's entry in 1942, greatly stimulated Mexican industry and expanded the industrial labor force. Lombardo Toledano and other labor leaders who were behind the push for industry suspended strike activity during the war. Mexico's industrialists organized powerful business associations to represent their interests and shape official economic policy. The U.S. government helped with an Export-Import Bank loan to develop a steel- and tinplate-rolling mill. Mexico's industrial sector grew on average 10 percent a year from 1940 to 1945.

Mexico's large industrial unions had watched inflation eat up wages during the war and, with the coming of peace, wanted a fair share of the national income. Government and business, on the other hand, feared that strikes and higher wages would slow capital accumulation, discourage foreign investment, and thus undermine industrialization. The CTM, after 1941 in the hands of Fidel Velázquez and other fervent collaborationists (Lombardo Toledano had been pushed aside), was willing to go along with government priorities. Its change of motto in 1947, from "For a society without classes" to "For the emancipation of Mexico," signaled this tendency. The CTM emerged from the war weaker and more dependent on government. It would fall to Avila Camacho's successor, President Miguel Alemán (1946-52), to discipline the labor movement, strengthen the CTM, and keep wages low. As Alemán told a CTM conference in 1947, Mexico needed "a policy of order and progress."

Cárdenas's "revolutionary instrument," the PRM, failed to stop this right turn. Avila Camacho removed the military sector from the PRM in 1941 and strengthened the popular sector in 1943, creating in the National Confederation of Popular Organizations a powerful conservative counterweight to the labor and peasant sectors. The dissolution of the PRM in early 1946 and its reconstitution as the Party of the Institutional Revolution was accompanied by "reforms" that increased the authority of the top leadership. Cárdenas's "revolutionary instrument" was by these steps transformed and downgraded into the electoral apparatus of the state.

At the end of Avila Camacho's term in late 1946, the noted economist Daniel Cosío Villegas wrote an article called "The Crisis of Mexico," published the following year in *Cuadernos Americanos*, Mexico's most prestigious intellectual review, announcing the "death" of the Mexican Revolution. Cosío Villegas maintained in it that the great principles of the Revolution had been corrupted or abandoned. In *Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread*, published in Spanish translation four years later, the U.S. historian Frank Tannenbaum agreed.

This history of the Revolution criticized Alemán's policy of industrialization, because it benefited a few narrow groups at the expense of most Mexicans. Many Mexicans were outraged by this foreigner's "attack" on their Revolution, but Cosío Villegas defended Tannenbaum and his conclusions.

As the decades passed, Cosío Villegas and Tannenbaum were in fact shown to be right. The "death" of the Revolution did not mean the undoing of mass politics, the closure of rural schools, the return of the hacienda system, or the abolition of the labor unions. It meant rather the abandonment of a humane vision of society that emphasized "people and their happiness and not the production of wealth" (Ramón Beteta). This vision had decried the "evils of the machine age" and celebrated the agrarian ideal of the prosperous peasant working his own land. It included an expectation that, in time, people would migrate from the city to the countryside. This vision condemned, in a PNR manifesto, "those forms of concentration of capital" that were destructive to the common good. It promised that "if anything like prosperity should ever come to Mexico it should be based on a growing acquisitive power of the workers" (Ramón Beteta). The abandonment of this vision required corrupting and weakening the institutions that had begun to create this new and better society.

Beginning in the 1940s, a different Mexico was envisioned—and created. The ejidos became increasingly marginal in national agriculture, and growing rural poverty pushed the peasants into shantytowns. A relatively small number of business groups came to own and control industry, commerce, communications, and finance. An increasing portion of the national economy was owned by foreign companies and investors, mainly with U.S. capital. Private farmlands became concentrated in the hands of a few landowners and agricultural companies. Wages for most workers lagged behind inflation. From the 1940s to the present, decade by decade, as the publication of each succeeding census demonstrated, income inequality increased, with the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer.

Revolution comes about when an alternative version of society is envisioned and destructive violence and constructive action are taken to create it. In the 1910s, Mexican revolutionaries fought for a better Mexico. During the 1920s and 1930s, they implemented significant reforms, which began to rebuild the nation. The Revolution was, therefore, revolutionary. This was made even clearer by the right turn made in the 1940s. But official Mexico's continued attachment to revolutionary rhetoric and symbols after 1940 could not disguise the fact that the Revolution had ended. It was replaced, as one critic noted, by "old, senseless words."



MEXICO AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

FRIEDRICH E. SCHULER

All Mexican governments after the end of the nineteenth-century French occupation and Maximilian's ill-conceived liberal monarchy had tried to bring about national economic development through foreign involvement. This meant enduring the consequences that came with immigration and the importing of foreign know-how, technology, investment. Foreign pressures came in the form of arrogant, demanding French creditors, political pressures from the U.S. State Department, manipulations by recently knighted British oil barons, and recently arrived Japanese male contract labor. In addition, Mexican governmental planners also dealt with merchants and financiers from the recently unified Germany, which they esteemed as less imperialistic than their counterparts in London and Paris. Nevertheless, planners also discussed rumors and difficulties arriving from Venezuela and the Caribbean, where German gunboat incidents suggested that they, too, continued to nurture the hope of a Latin American sphere of influence in the new twentieth century. Privately, high-level officials in the Porfirio Díaz administration admitted a certain sympathy for such aggressive foreign impulses. After all, for decades Mexicans had affirmed a distinct sphere of influence over Guatemala and other Central American countries. It seemed as much fueled by the simple human impulse of wanting control as it was part of white Western "civilization" politics.

Foreign cultural influences shaped Mexican attitudes as much as capitalistic economic constraints and diplomatic pressures from London, Paris, or Washington. The Catholic Church, dominated as it was by Spanish clergy, preached its mantra of a revival of European piety based on the iron dogmas of the Counter-Reformation. With it came an insistence on the preservation of Spanish social, racial, and gender hierarchies, as well as the unfounded, but inspiring and romantic, ideals of Hispanidad; that is, that groups of Spanish speakers formed an almost biologically separate ethnic group in the world. Mexico was included in nineteenth-century global efforts by the Catholic