

MEXICO

THE STATE AND INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS:  
THE CASE OF THE 1977 NATIONAL UNIVERSITY LABOR DISPUTE

by

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Mexico, the State and Independent Organizations: the

Case of the 1977 National University Labor Dispute

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Mexican independent working and middle class movements which sprang up in the 1940s when the Mexican governments concentrated on a program of industrialization via an import-substitution program. This program was accompanied by an inflationary process, by the freezing of salaries and wages, and by the creation of strong corporative organizations, which discipline and control the working masses.

The main assumptions underlying this study are that the Mexican Revolution of 1910 did not change the political, social and economic system significantly, but rather reoriented capitalist development; it certainly did not create a democratic system; and it did not break its dependence on imperialist centers. Furthermore, popular discontent is manipulated through social reforms, some militants are coopted into the state apparatus via lucrative positions, and when neither cooptation nor social reforms are effective the state employs its repressive apparatus. The five case studies under consideration show how this pattern develops and how it runs its course to its logical conclusion.

The most important post-revolutionary independent movements have been taken into consideration, starting with the railroad workers' protest of 1958-1959, the medical movement of 1964-1965, the popular explosion of 1968 and the electricians' discontent of 1976. The emphasis was on developing a pattern of similarities and differences and how the movements have progressed in dealing with the confrontations with the state.

The University labor dispute of 1977 was an outgrowth of the previous eruptions of discontent, but it superseded its precursors in terms of

organization and political awareness.

The 1977 University movement is the main focus of this study. It shows all the characteristics of the previous popular demonstrations in that its members fought for better working conditions and higher wages to make up for loss of purchasing power due to inflation and the devaluation of the peso. But when the movement demanded the implementation of democratic procedures both within the University and the one-party dominated society at large, the state felt compelled to send 12,000 granaderos to occupy University City.

The conclusions drawn were that the Mexican political system cannot tolerate a democratic opening without relinquishing the power of the official party whose undisputed head is the President of the Republic, and that the government employs repression against any threats to its hegemony. Moreover, no sector in society is immune to repression. Even though the governments may prefer cooptation and concessions first, in the last instance, militant peasants, workers, as well as middle class groups have not escaped the state's repressive powers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

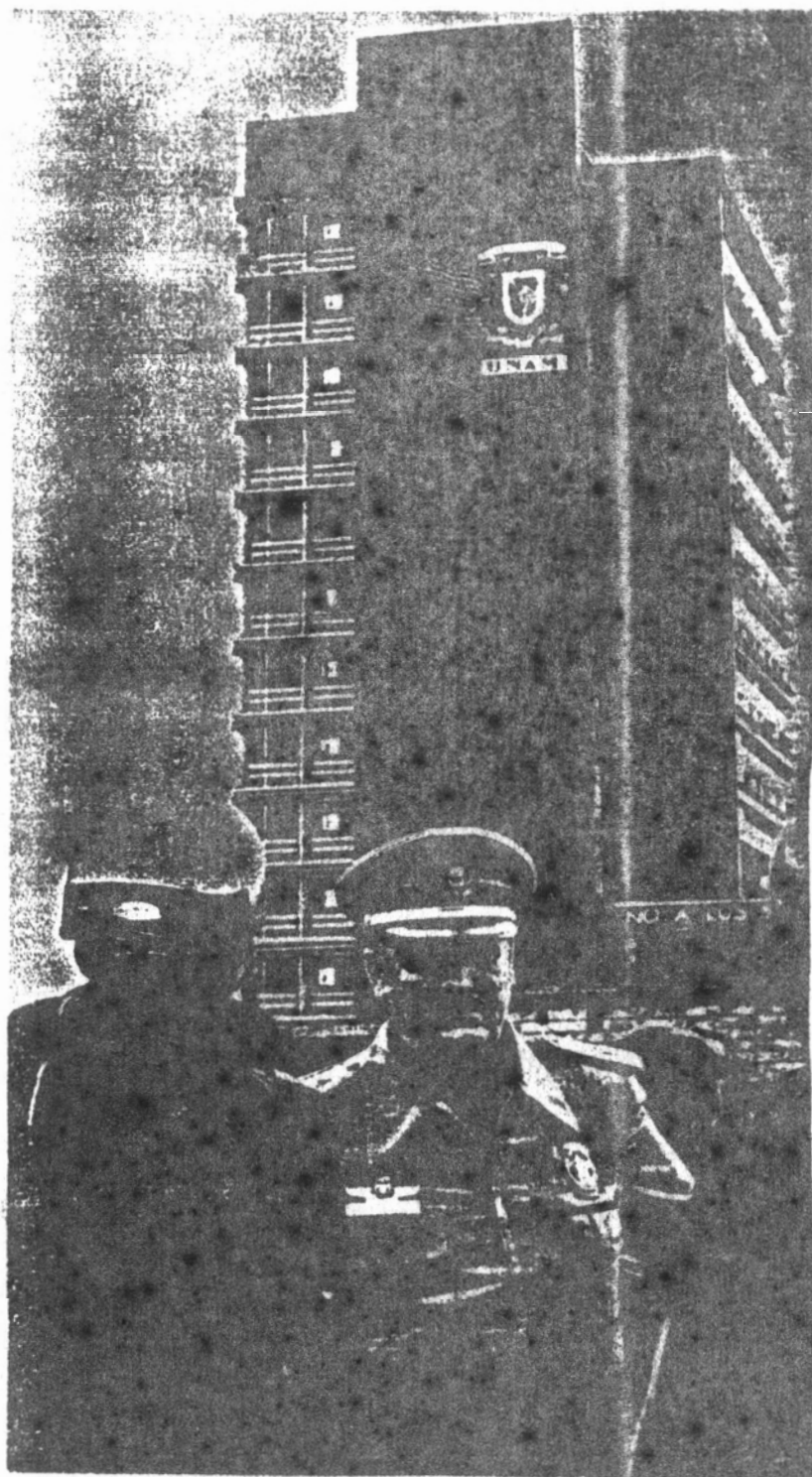
I wish to thank my supervisor, Marilyn Gates, for her useful suggestions on how to improve this thesis. I also wish to extend my sincerest thanks to my second supervisor, Alberto Ciria, for the challenging questions he posed and his patient readings of my thesis drafts.

Research for this thesis would have been very difficult without the assistance of the UNAM's Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, and in particular without the friendly help of Arnaldo Córdova, who not only provided me with recently published material but also helped me define my thesis topic.

For clarification of many conceptual approaches I am deeply indebted to my Bolivian friend, Graciela Toro Ibañez, and my Peruvian friend, Ricardo Díaz Chávez, who both lived in exile in Mexico City in 1977.

A very special thank you goes to all those belonging to or supporting the STUNAM, who helped me struggle through the morass of confusing information emanating from the media with regard to the conflict at the UNAM. Their wish for anonymity makes it impossible for me to thank them by name.

Errors in the presentation of the information and its interpretation are solely my responsibility.



THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION  
IS DEAD. IT HAS BEEN  
DEAD FOR A LONG TIME,  
AND WE HADN'T EVEN  
NOTICED.

Che Guevara

PROCESO

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with a neglected but very important aspect of post-revolutionary Mexican society: the increasing discontent and protest of working and middle class Mexicans. This discontent expresses itself in the rejection of institutionalized methods of control and domination of the masses by state bureaucracies, such as peasants and workers, as well as middle class confederations, all of which are vertically integrated into the official political party -- Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party). The movement is generally characterized by its demands for democratization, independence from state bureaucracies and autonomy with regard to decision-making within particular organizations.

In the context of this thesis independent movements are defined as all those movements operating outside the institutionalized framework designed by the state and pressuring the government to reevaluate its political philosophy and its methods of social control and domination. Whether successful or not, these movements leave an impact on the social, political and economic make-up of Mexican society, which even repeated repression cannot erase. The movements generally start within a nucleus of workers or professionals who have specific grievances, usually of an economic nature, and accelerate into strikes with sharp political overtones supported by a wide variety of unions, political parties, and sympathizers from the population.

The most important post-revolutionary independent movements have been taken into consideration, starting with the railroad workers' protest of

1958-1959, the medical movement of 1964-1965, the popular explosion of 1968 and the electricians' discontent of 1976. The emphasis was on developing a pattern of similarities and differences and how the movements have progressed in dealing with the confrontations with the state. The University movement of 1977 was an outgrowth of the previous eruptions of discontent, but it superseded its precursors in terms of organization and political awareness.

The most systematic attempt at identifying independent movements has been made by Evelyn Stevens in her book Protest and Response in Mexico (1974), in which she analyzes the impact the railroad workers' protest, the doctors' strikes, and the student movement had on the state's increasing hard line vis-à-vis these eruptions of discontent. Her research focuses on communication and behavior and her assessment reduces the political significance of these protests to the traditional machismo<sup>1</sup> of the Mexican male. The strong, domineering and intransigent government is seen as suffering from a severe case of machismo, always in a better position because of its monopoly on public force.

Outstanding with regard to independent movements is Antonio Alonso's book El movimiento ferrocarrilero en México, 1958-1959 (1972), in which he analyzes the railroad workers' protest and concludes that this particular union has abandoned the ideology of class conciliation and has recovered its consciousness of a class for itself, thus arriving at a situation of class struggle. Alonso's book laid the foundations for the comparisons of the five cases I have studied.

Concerning the student movement Ramón Ramírez' painstaking compilation of documents in El movimiento estudiantil de México, julio -

diciembre 1968 (1969), provided a wealth of material on which to draw for the specific purpose of this thesis, which focuses on the National University labor dispute of 1977.

Other sources consulted restricted their analysis to the interpretation of one case study without attempting to connect the importance of the movements to one another. Notwithstanding, the detailed information obtained from these sources helped substantially in the quest to find a pattern running through and connecting all independent protest movements. Among those sources were the highly informative article by Loyo Brombila (1975) and Vallejo's book (1957) concerning the railroad workers; Poniatowska's (1971) eyewitness reports of the student movement, and Guevara Niebla's (1978) reassessment of the same protest after ten years had passed; with regard to the electricians the NACLA report (Sept.-Oct. 1977), and the short essay by Gómez Tagle & Miquet (1976) were helpful. Extensive use was made of news stories and short articles in a variety of magazines and periodicals.

Generally speaking, the phenomenon of independent movements has not yet found its way into scholarly literature. Investigators of Mexican society are still too preoccupied with the very fascinating study of the Mexican Revolution, which in recent years has fallen more and more under attack for its failure to change Mexican society substantially. The revival of interest in the Mexican Revolution is largely due to the influence of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, which showed that a society can be transformed and that the ties of dependency can be broken. In the light of new insights gained, scholars began to reject the liberal interpretation of the Mexican Revolution, which in its most blatant form had been portrayed

by Robert Scott (1964). Scott assumed that the Mexican political model had attained a stage of "balanced interests," which is the prerequisite for a stable political situation in the process of modernization. Mexico is evolving to a more developed stage, which he calls "Westernization," a model built on the North American political system. Scott assumes that every country in the process of modernization has to reach this stage. He, moreover, draws attention to the rise of so-called interest groups, the presence of opposition parties and growing popular participation within the official party and concludes that these aspects are the main evidence for Mexico's turn towards democracy. However, the opposition parties, the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN, National Action Party), the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS, Popular Socialist Party), and the Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM, Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution) are widely considered as "paper parties" with no real political power or influence. Additionally, popular participation has suffered severely when the reform-minded leader of the official party, Carlos Madrazo, was sacked by Gustavo Díaz Ordaz in 1965.

Other scholars of the Mexican Revolution recognized that the upheaval of 1910 did not produce a democratic political system, but they fell short of saying that the revolution itself created these conditions. Frank Brandenburg (1964), for example, points to the myth of progressive democratization. He feels that if decision-making had really resided in the official party and not in the small circle of the "revolutionary family," Mexico might well have evolved into a workers' state. The extremely well organized "revolutionary family," according to Brandenburg, sponsored rapid economic growth on the basis of consensual acceptance of the goals

promoted by the 1917 Constitution. He concludes that the Mexican political system shows no signs of turning more democratic in the future and thinks that the best Mexicans could hope for was a benevolent chief executive in office.

Pablo González Casanova (1970) argues the Revolution's incompleteness. He does not think that it was a total failure, and he produces a mountain of statistics to show that today's Mexico lacks political, social and economic democracy. As a solution he suggests that "if development is sought it must be a peaceful development and, in Marxist terminology, it must be a bourgeois development and a bourgeois democracy" (1970:195), if Mexico is not to revert to a dictatorial government in times of crisis. This analysis, however, overlooks that Mexico has already established a dictatorship of the presidential variety and that the ties of dependence prevent an autonomous development of a national bourgeoisie capable of establishing a bourgeois democracy.

Another pro-revolution, but nevertheless critical position is put forward by Jesús Silva Herzog (1949), who concludes that the revolution's promises of democracy and social justice have been substituted for a program of industrialization.

A new wave of scholarly work appeared in the 1970s trying to fill the void left by liberal interpretations. Thus, Adolfo Gilly (1971), writing from Lecumberri Prison in which he spent time because of his involvement in the 1968 student movement, saw the Mexican Revolution as potentially leading to socialism. He pinpoints the failure to achieve this goal to the ideological shortcomings of the participants, as well as to the defeat of peasant and working class movements. Notwithstanding, Gilly insists

there exists a dynamic tradition which might complete the "interrupted revolution."

The most outstanding contribution to the new interpretation of the Mexican Revolution comes from Arnaldo Córdova (1972, 1973, 1974, 1977a). He concludes that the Mexican Revolution was not a social but a political movement which only incidentally had some social side effects. "A political revolution does not imply a revolutionary transformation of the relations of property but only its reform. A social revolution, on the contrary, signifies not only the destruction of the existent political order, but also of private property" (Córdova, 1972:25). The goal of the leaders was to promote capitalist development and to this end social reforms were implemented. The reforms were purely manipulatory in that they subdued and pacified the masses; thus, they were clearly of a counterrevolutionary nature.

Córdova, moreover, departs from the traditional interpretation of the 1910 revolution being a watershed in Mexican history. He follows Daniel Cosío Villegas' (1965) lead, who concluded that Mexico's modern history began around 1876. Córdova observes that the centralized régime, which was constructed after the revolution, was a logical extension of the Porfiriato. The revolution, however, added a popular dimension, in that its leaders became the champions of the popular classes (peasants, workers, and state employees) while at the same time promoting the interests of an emerging bourgeoisie. Thus, the revolution worked to the detriment of most Mexicans. Córdova also emphasizes that the new Mexican state, even though retaining some control over negotiations with foreign nations, was not able to break its dependence on imperialist powers, since it

condemned itself to adopt the European and North American model of modernization. Moreover, he states, the development of capitalism in Mexico was not an autonomous process as it had occurred in Western Europe, where economic development had led to a political transformation. In Mexico, a powerful state forced the initial economic growth. The "hombres fuertes" (strong men) of the 1920s and early 1930s neglected genuine social reforms since they were preoccupied with the establishment of a powerful state which would make economic betterment on a mass level possible in the future. Córdova credits Lázaro Cárdenas with the populist social contract which consolidated political and social stability of Mexico. He also emphasizes the omnipotence of the ruling official party stating that

every movement for change is immediately discredited when confronted with presidential power, and the enormous capacity of the government to mobilize globally and almost at once the whole of institutionalized society under its command, is a very effective help (1972:60-61).

This observation is generally correct, but it ignores that there are clear limits to official omnipotence. One of these limits is imposed on Mexico by its dependent status on external powers, and a second one arises from within in the form of the persistent growth of forces which transcend the institutional framework and shake the foundations of the national consensus that had ruled Mexico since the 1940s. These forces are the focus of this thesis. Isolated groups in Mexico have long recognized the lack of real democracy and the failure of the Mexican Revolution to institute a democratic political, economic, and social system. This thesis adopts basically Córdova's interpretation of the Mexican Revolution and concentrates on those forces which pressure for genuine change.

As already alluded to, Mexico's particular situation in the global context cannot be understood without placing it into its proper relation with regard to its dependence on foreign powers. The dependency perspective has by no means been universally accepted. It is, therefore, necessary to recall the liberal diffusionist position and contrast it with what has been called the dependency model.

Briefly, the diffusionists believe that modernization and development constitute a continuous and irreversible progression from traditionalism to modernism (W.W. Rostow); that modern, industrial society has transcended classes insofar as there exists now a plurality of interest groups which bargain with each other until they arrive at a compromise that does not upset the natural equilibrium of the social organism (Talcott Parsons, Ralf Dahrendorf); and that development occurs through the spread of cultural and material benefits from developed to underdeveloped areas (John Kenneth Galbraith).

The dependency model, on the other hand, states that cultural values and material benefits from the developed nations do not bring about development but, rather, that Latin American economies were shaped to a great extent by the needs of the industrializing and expanding European centers. Latin America became both the supplier of raw materials to the dominant nations and the market for manufactured goods from the dominant nations. The Spanish Crown placed restrictions on the establishment of independent Latin American enterprises to avoid competition, which retarded Latin American entrepreneurship and industrialization from the beginning.

Today, the United States has replaced both Spain and Britain as the center power, but Latin American dependency has not changed. Instead,



dependence has deepened through increasing penetration by foreign corporations, financial institutions, manufacturing and retailing enterprises, and communications, advertising and educational practices. Repatriated profits, interest payments on loans, fees for royalties, patents, insurance and shipping drain desperately needed capital out of the countries. Within each country a similar pattern is repeated -- the cities drain the surplus of the countryside through a process of internal colonialism. Thus, the dependentistas state, the countryside is not poor because it is feudal but because it has enriched the cities. By extension, Latin American countries are not underdeveloped because they utilize traditional methods for production and have not reached Rostow's "take-off" stage yet, but because they have contributed to the development of the now highly industrialized nations.

The solution to underdevelopment, therefore, does not lie in greater penetration by foreign industries which only retards self-sustaining independent development since outside control is strengthened, but a total change in the political, economic, and social structure of the existing order. The prospects Latin American nations face are increasing dependence and capitalist development for the benefit of a few under the political control of military dictatorships or, as an alternative, social revolutions leading to a socialist transformation.

The approach taken in this thesis follows the dependency model, mainly because it is rationally, logically and empirically sounder than the diffusionist model.

Within the dependency model, past research in Latin America centered around 1) the development of underdevelopment, which André Gunder Frank

elaborated in 1966 and 1967. He accentuated commercial monopoly rather than feudalism or pre-capitalist forms as the driving force by which the metropolises exploit the satellites. Thus, capitalism on a world scale produced simultaneously the economic development of the metropolis and the economic underdevelopment of the periphery. The same process can also be recognized within the nations, that is, the domestic metropolises (the cities) produce the underdevelopment of the countryside or satellite cities. 2) Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1971) elaborated on dependency and development stating that capitalist development can take place within dependent nations, but this development creates a restricted, limited and upper class oriented type of society which is dependent on foreign investment. 3) The "new dependency" formulated by Theotonio dos Santos traces the pattern of dependence from the colonial period to its transition in the 19th century and its modern expression in the form of the physical existence of multinational corporations in the dependent countries. Dos Santos divided dependence into three clearly distinguishable periods:

- 1) colonial dependence, in which commercial and financial capital in alliance with the colonialist state dominated the economic relations between the Europeans and the colonies, by means of a trade monopoly complemented by a colonial monopoly of land, mines and manpower (serf or slave) in the colonized countries.
- 2) Financial-industrial dependence, which consolidated itself at the end of the 19th century, characterized by the domination of capital in the hegemonic centers, and its expansion abroad through investment in the production of raw materials and agricultural products for consumption in the hegemonic centers. A productive structure grew up in the dependent countries devoted to the export of these products, which Levin labelled export economies, producing what ECLA has called "foreign-oriented development."
- 3) In the post-World War II period a new type of dependence has been consolidated, based on multinational corporations which began to invest in industries geared to the internal market of underdeveloped countries. This is basically technological-industrial dependence (dos Santos, 1971:227-228).

Mexico shares all of the above characteristics. Even more so, since its close proximity to the United States has converted it into the most favorite host for the multinational corporations, multinational in the sense that they are owned and controlled by U.S. businessmen but operate in a multiplicity of other nations. The multinationals, moreover, are increasingly investing in the more profitable manufacturing industries. In 1911, for example, only 4 percent of foreign private investment went into manufacture rising dramatically to 74.2 percent by 1968, whereas foreign investment into agriculture and mining declined from 35 percent in 1911 to 6.7 percent in 1968 (Cordero Huerta, 1974:34). The industrialization policies, known as developmentalism, of the Mexican governments and a growing consumer market contributed to the factors which attracted North American investors.

Even though the Mexican governments tried to retain control over the economy, foreign capital soon took over. Out of 251 foreign corporations established in Mexico in 1968, 182 (72.41%) were found in the most dynamic and profitable capital goods industry (manufacture and reparation of machinery, equipment and transport materials, as well as the production of chemicals). Only 69 (27.59%) of the foreign corporations were established in consumer goods production (Cordero Huerta, 1974:28). Furthermore, multinational corporations offer lower prices for their products forcing Mexican competitors out of the market. Unable to compete, Mexican small and medium enterprises either go bankrupt or sell out to the large corporations, thus accelerating the concentration of monopoly capitalism. Moreover, the multinational corporations expatriate the greater part of their profits made in Mexico, thus not only denationalizing industry but also

decapitalizing the economy. The outflow of profits (\$782 million in 1976), the need to import technology, fees for patents, royalties, etc., and restrictive quotas on agricultural goods for export, all contribute to the Mexican public foreign debt. The accumulated effect of this process manifests itself in the fact that the foreign debt "with a maturity of greater than one year grew from \$842 million in 1960 to \$3,511 million in 1969" (Barkin, 1975:5) to about \$30 billion in 1977.

Mexico's quest for North American-style modernization has brought the country a high concentration of wealth in a small circle of politicians and businessmen tied to the imperialist center, as well as a high concentration of misery and increasing marginality in a large part of the population suffering from unemployment and underemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy and a general feeling of hopelessness.

It is useful at this point to give operational definitions for the main concepts utilized in this thesis to avoid confusion.

Monopoly Capitalism:

It has replaced the laissez-faire capitalism of the 19th century. Laissez-faire capitalism implies perfect competition between businesses. During the process of competition those enterprises, which did not have a large amount of cash reserves, were forced out of the market by those who were able to lower their prices temporarily to crush competitors. This process accelerated when new technology (emerging in the last decades of the 19th century) in steel, oil, chemicals and hydroelectricity allowed for mass production enabling larger producers to absorb smaller ones. The giant corporations formed in that way have a large cash flow and are

thus able to raise capital to finance labor-saving technology and to establish worldwide marketing systems. At the periphery (in countries such as Mexico) of the modern economy are many firms which serve as sub-contractors to the dominant corporations. They typically surrender control and power to determine prices to the multinational corporations. Retailing and servicing fields, uninteresting because unprofitable to the large corporations, are usually the domain of national firms. These enterprises are generally labor-intensive and less productive. Their survival prospects are precarious since they lack money, are squeezed by government regulations and face continually the threat of elimination by larger corporations.

Monopolies maintain their high profits only by restricting production to keep prices high. They could easily sell more, but only by lowering their prices. This forced underproduction combined with labor-saving equipment, contributes not only to inflation but also to unemployment. Thus, planned underproduction and the use of capital-intensive technology translates into planned unemployment. In Mexico, as in other peripheral countries, this fact expresses itself in dangerously high unemployment rates.

#### Modernization:

This highly ethnocentric concept implies that peripheral nations, now underdeveloped, will have to pass through the same stages of development as the highly developed nations of Western Europe and North America. Modernization implies that such development is desirable and is the only answer to what is called underdevelopment. The concept, however, does not take into account the strings of dependency which prevent such develop-

ment.

Developmentalism (desarrollismo):

This concept follows logically the implications of the modernization concept. It is "an ideology that stresses the technical aspects of development and modernization, and suppresses the reference to the political control of these processes. In the wake of the failure of bourgeois groups to effect a course of autonomous development, seized by the fear of more radical alternatives, developmentalism represents for these groups a technocratic ideology that neutralizes the implications of the perception of foreign domination over essential productive processes" (Chilcote and Edelstein, 1974:736). In Mexico, developmentalism marked the ideological universe of the years since 1940 (import-substitution process). This ideology allowed the rationalization that the unequal distribution of income was a necessary evil during the period of economic development of the country. It also assumed that the accumulation of capital would lead to the modernization of production under the control of national capital. During this initial etappe of industrialization, foreign capital was accepted to complement national capital.

Populism:

This concept has been defined as "a social movement and a political regime which says it represents before all of society the interests of the working masses ... and which is the carrier of a modernizing project of capitalism ... as the only form to conquer, in the future, the definite well-being of the masses" (Córdova, 1977a:67-68). Populism is the

political dimension of the economic concept developmentalism. In this thesis I shall employ the concept populism as defined by Córdova.

Development and Underdevelopment:

Both concepts are also highly ethnocentric, since underdevelopment has been used as a measure to obtain the degree to which a peripheral nation has progressed in contrast to Western European and North American development. More specifically, development refers to the level of technology achieved in the process of production. Formerly colonized countries now finding themselves under imperialist sway lack a high level of technology because of their continuous dependent status. The word development in the context of this thesis will imply not only the technological progress of a nation, but the political, social, economic and cultural emancipation of the whole population within and between nations. In this sense, both the so-called developed and underdeveloped countries are actually still underdeveloped. North Americans as well as Western Europeans have not solved problems of inequality between classes, ethnic minorities, women and men; neither have they solved unemployment, environmental pollution, etc. Development then will refer to a utopia, in which humanity has become civilized, that is to say, the domination and exploitation of man and woman by man has ceased; the available resources of a nation, natural and manufactured, are owned and worked in common by its people and are shared within and between nations; the incentive to produce lies in the natural desire of humans to create and not in the threat of unemployment and starvation; and most of all real development lies in a system that does not emphasize growth for growth's sake -- the chaotic production of more cars,

more underarm deodorants, more fashionable clothes, etc. -- but in a planned economy geared to what all people need -- nutritional food and not myriads of junk food (Coca Cola, McDonald's hamburgers, etc.), decent housing well insulated against heat or cold and noise, good and critical education for all including university education, free health care, and so on. The technology exists to qualitatively transform living standards. However, given the present rush for profits, such a system will be hard to achieve.

Dependent late developing capitalism:

Refers to the phenomenon that peripheral nations have not developed a full-blown capitalist system, and that their leaders have opted for the development of such a system (developmentalism) rather than an alternative one, such as socialism, for example. United States capitalism is considered the most developed here. Dependent, because late developing countries, such as Mexico, depend on technology, skills and finances from imperialist centers, thus shaping a debt-trap similar to the one of the peón enslaved to the hacienda owner via a huge debt passed on from generation to generation. Consequently, dependence expresses itself in a growing foreign debt, imbalance in foreign trade (more imports than exports), decapitalization of the economy through profit outflow, and loss of control over businesses through foreign direct investment, in other words, capitalism develops under conditions imposed by imperialism.

Corporate and authoritarian state:

A political system in which the state enjoys the authority of granting



recognition to the organization of social classes and advising them of the institutional limits within which conflicts are allowed to unfold. The social classes are integrated into highly hierarchized state organizations (peasant sector, labor sector, state employees), and their leaders resolve disputes within tripartite bodies, in which the state reserves for itself the role of "independent arbiter." State arbitration allows the government to set itself up as the supreme power of the nation guaranteeing, moreover, the hegemony of the political elite. As Ianni (1974) suggests, the state assumes the role of master, public administrator, and principal agent in the management of the economy. Furthermore, Mexican corporatism recognizes class struggle, but it wishes to end the conflict between labor and capital to be able to concentrate on increasing national production. Hence its emphasis on class conciliation, national unity, alliance for production, truce between employers and workers, etc.

In conclusion, the main assumptions underlying this thesis are that the Mexican Revolution of 1910 did not change the political, economic and social system significantly, but rather reoriented capitalist development; it certainly did not create a democratic system; and it did not break its dependence on imperialist centers; it cannot progress (meaning to provide a good living standard for all Mexicans) without breaking this dependency. Furthermore, popular discontent is manipulated through social reforms, some militants are coopted into the state apparatus via lucrative positions, and when neither cooptation nor social reforms are effective the state employs its repressive machine to crush protests.

## Research Design and Implementation

When I went to Mexico in Summer, 1977, for a semester of field work my thesis topic had not been clearly defined. I was interested in protest movements, their historical roots and their effects on government policies. Once in Mexico City I immersed myself in the study and assembly of historical material available to me at the Hemeroteca Nacional, Biblioteca de México, Banco de México, El Colegio de México, Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales and Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

While I was pursuing my research I became marginally interested in a dispute unfolding before my eyes and involving the academic, administrative and maintenance personnel versus the administration of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM, National Autonomous University of Mexico). A strike was imminent, and once it had been declared all archives and libraries connected with the UNAM were struck. At this point I had defined my thesis topic. I abandoned some of the vague ideas I had concerning my research and gave all my time and attention to the struggle of the emerging Sindicato de Trabajadores de la UNAM (STUNAM, Union of Workers of the UNAM).

I adopted the role of the participant observer conducting open-ended informal interviews with members and sympathizers of the new union, attending those meetings which were open to the public (most STUNAM meetings were closed) and taking part in street demonstrations. The informal interviews made it possible to extract information which quite often gets lost in structured questionnaires. I let a person speak for as long as (s)he wanted to and asked questions only when I felt I needed further clarifica-

tion for the purposes of this thesis. Generally, I found Mexicans very cooperative and willing to talk with me, although I encountered the odd person who remained uncommunicative. I attributed this factor to the fear of retribution rampant among the more militant participants and the mistrust and suspicions many radical Mexicans have of foreigners of the North American variety. It was of paramount importance, therefore, to assure those interviewed of complete anonymity, which makes it impossible to acknowledge anybody by name.

The main written information concerning the STUNAM I extracted from sources such as news stories, editorials, articles and advertisements appearing in newspapers and magazines. Official government bulletins, leaflets distributed by the strikers and their supporters, and posters by both STUNAM and administration plastered on the information bulletin boards in University City, as well as my field notes were other sources providing me with a wealth of material to work from.

For my interpretation of the four protest movements preceding the STUNAM, as well as for the historical background and the relationship between the state and the social classes I relied heavily on published material of primary and secondary nature. A content analysis here revealed the historical pattern of domination and control, the outbreak of mass discontent, and the governments' reactions to pressures from the masses.

One final word concerning the utilization of statistics is necessary here. I purposely avoided the overuse of statistics since my own experience has taught me that they are generally quite unreliable. For example, one can obtain a quite different set of statistics for the same research

category due to the use of different criteria gathered by sub-departments of the same government agency as illustrated below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Unemployment according to the Population Censuses</u>	<u>Unemployment according to the Oficina de Estadísticas Sociales</u>
1940	66,880	164,000
1950	105,177	232,000
1960	182,088	251,000

Source: Dirección General de Estadísticas

When I employed statistics I did so only after I felt relatively secure that they in fact approximated the real value of the phenomenon studied.

Chapter I provides the historical setting in which protest movements have unfolded and have been coopted or repressed. I found the study of history important insofar as it furnished me with insights concerning the pattern of continuity or discontinuity of the phenomena under consideration.

Chapter II supplies the theoretical frame of reference which I have constructed with the help of the sources cited and after I had analyzed the five case studies.

Chapter III provides an interpretation of the most important post-revolution expressions of discontent with respect to their effect on government reaction and policy-making.

Chapters IV and V are a detailed study of one such movement and is interpreted in the light of the pattern established by the preceding protests and divergences from this pattern.

Chapter VI endeavors to pull together the most significant aspects of

the protest movements and their prospects for survival.

The study, of course, is by no means definitive. Much more could be said in much greater detail. This, however, would necessitate more time and another lengthy stay in Mexico.

CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL SETTING

The Porfiriato, 1876-1911

" ... he dado suficientes pruebas de que no aspiro al poder."

" ... I proved sufficiently that I do not aspire for power."

Porfirio Díaz

Porfirio Díaz came to power after a revolt against the government of Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in 1876. His battle cry had been "effective suffrage - no reelection," and his major concern had been the reestablishment of the liberal Constitution of 1857. From 1876 to 1880, the country experienced a hegemonic vacuum in which neither the landowners, the speculators, nor the industrialists were capable of forming a government. In addition, the so-called Liberal Party was so divided and fragmented that it was in no position to take over political leadership (Leal, 1975b:41). It had defeated the conservative elements of the wars of independence and the Reform period, but it left the country in disorder and material backwardness, which the Porfiristas exploited to promote their ideas of material growth and capital accumulation. But during his first years in power Díaz faced rebellious generals in the various regions of the country who made it difficult for him to remain in the presidency. Consequently, he concentrated his efforts towards eliminating regional strongmen and towards forming a centralized government with its seat in Mexico City. He diminished the effectiveness of the judiciary and the legislature and curtailed severely the autonomy of regional and municipal governments. In

fact, he established a personal dictatorship based on the respect of legal forms combined with the energetic use of force when necessary. He proposed the conciliation of classes, thus, perhaps unintentionally, acknowledging the class structure of Mexican society. He insisted that he belonged to everybody and to nobody in particular. Arnaldo Córdova relates that Díaz himself "was the State. He identified with nobody and the administration of his power benefitted everybody" (1973:46). This myth Díaz perpetuated until his downfall in 1911. His most powerful instruments for the diffusion of this ideology were a group of intellectuals -- the científicos<sup>2</sup> -- who justified the Porfirian régime not only as desirable but also as based on natural laws which were legitimated by scientific principles. Thus, a socio-economic and political régime of privilege developed, sanctioned by the positivist ideology of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer as adjusted by the Mexican positivists to the particular circumstances of Mexican society. Mexican positivism was a philosophical doctrine at the service of a political and social group which facilitated the domination of other groups. According to Leopoldo Zea the Mexican positivists were quite aware of this instrumental character of their philosophy (1943:26-27). The científicos had become extremely useful to the state and as their reward they received high public posts in the government bureaucracy as well as the control of the banking system and the ownership of many of the existing manufacturing enterprises, of some mines and railroads. Local and regional functionaries were allowed to enrich themselves as well in return for their loyalty to the President. This functional corruption was an effective means to control opposition, for to disappoint Díaz would have meant to lose an attractive and lucrative

position (Meyer, 1977:7). As a check on state governors Díaz had established an elaborate system of jefes políticos (political bosses), who successfully prevented local autonomy and independence (Quirk, 1960:2-3).

Díaz' economic goal was to achieve the capitalist development of Mexico at the national level (Leal, 1974:9; Córdova, 1973:19), following the North American and Western European model of development. It was to be a "privileged" capitalism insofar as the producing masses -- the peasants and the workers -- were not considered citizens; they had no right to vote and thus lacked participation (if only formal) in political decision-making. They were worked like animals not even receiving enough wages to subsist.

However, the Porfirian elite did not take into account one major factor, which prevented Mexican capitalism from "taking-off" independently and autonomously. This factor was the dependent status of the nation on foreign financing and foreign technology. Foreign investors, such as North Americans, the British, Canadians, and the French were situated in the extraction and the processing of minerals, in the railroads, in public services (electricity, communications, urban transport), in agriculture for export, and to a lesser degree in manufacturing industries.

Aside from the imperialist bourgeoisie, two distinct fractions of a Mexican national bourgeoisie developed. For example, among the regional bourgeoisies were found such illustrious names as the Maderos who owned various haciendas, a textile factory, participated in the bank of Nuevo León, exported products to the United States, etc. Luis Terrazas, of whom it was said that Chihuahua belonged to him, had acquired enormous properties at incredibly low prices under the Reform Laws. He also established



himself as exporter of cattle and beef into the United States and participated in the foundation of two banks (Leal, 1975b:44-45). Venustiano Carranza, a great landowner in Coahuila, was various times senator in the Díaz' régime and finally became governor of his home state (Basurto, 1975:43). These three cases are only examples and many more such families could be found in urban centers, such as Monterrey, San Luis Potosí, Mexico City, Guadalajara and Puebla.

Another fraction of the national bourgeoisie associated with the científicos, thus putting themselves into a better position vis-à-vis the regional bourgeoisie insofar as they were closely tied to those in political power and were able to realize their own interests. Because of the political weakness of the local and regional landowners, bankers, and industrialists and their fragmentation, the científicos emerged as the predominant fraction of the bourgeoisie.

The social classes which had been marginalized by the Porfirian régime of privilege were a mass of small and medium-sized rural and urban proprietors, who, because of the process of monopolization, found themselves at the borders of ruin; intellectuals and middle class professionals, whose economic and socio-political opportunities in the cities were blocked by the closed system; urban workers who grew in numbers as industry developed; artisans, who were ruined by the same process; and a mass of peasants without land, many of whom had been expropriated violently under the vacant land laws of 1883 and 1894. According to Jose María Calderón, 830 hacendados existed in Mexico in 1910, whereas 3,123,975 day laborers, who, together with their families, formed a total of about ten million individuals, were subjected to a system of peonage (1972:36). In addition,

the company stores impeded social mobility of the peasants binding them to the haciendas in a perpetual debt cycle. Consequently, the peasants found themselves under effective political control.

Because of Mexico's incipient industrialism the urban working class was quite small. Workers, however, in contrast to their peasant counterparts, began to establish as early as 1864 organizations of a mutualist character. These mutualist societies were quite ineffective when dealing with the hostilities of industrialists and since they were not protected by law, they often folded.

In 1870 a number of mutualist societies founded the Gran Círculo de Obreros (Great Circle of Workers) to unite the burgeoning local mutualist cooperatives and to integrate them into a national labor central. But from the beginning, the Gran Círculo was divided -- a constant in the Mexican labor movement -- into those who advocated social revolution, at that time along anarchist lines, and those who believed in reform through legislative action. The moderates gained control and their leaders laid the foundations for working class dependence on the arbitral powers of the President. However, Díaz did not tolerate this workingmen's association. He initiated a repressive campaign against moderates and radicals alike, and in 1883 he closed the Gran Círculo de Obreros (Anderson, 1976:85).

The obstacles the nascent proletariat had to overcome were formidable. Not only were they faced with hostility from the industrialists and repression by the government but, as Salvador Hernández explains, they also had to break away from apolitical labor leaders who through the implementation of reforms "from above" had attempted to neutralize the force of the artisan movement to bring it under the control of the paternalistic

governments of Benito Juárez, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, and Porfirio Díaz. In other words, they had to rescue the tradition of struggle transmitted by the artisans to the industrial proletariat (1977:3-4).

Perhaps the most important attempt at organization occurred among the railwaymen, who first formed their own mutualist society, the Supreme Order of Mexican Railway Employees in 1888, but by 1904 they had graduated to the Grand League of Railway Workers based more clearly on trade union lines (Clark, 1934:5), that is, they had abandoned the self-help principles to combat the employers directly. The Grand League was an important forerunner of later railroad unions and influenced them greatly.

The grievances of the Mexican working class during the Porfiriato were manifold -- low wages, long working hours, unhygienic working conditions, child labor, company stores, foreign supervisors, use of English on the railroads, etc. -- and when they exploded into the strike of the Cananea copper miners in 1906, the railroad mechanics strike of the same year, and the revolt of the Río Blanco textile mill workers in 1907,<sup>3</sup> the Díaz régime repeatedly sent in the federal troops, supplemented by United States rangers, to violently suppress the rebellions. He had the leaders imprisoned, exiled or assassinated, but most importantly, he tried to isolate the working class from the influence of petty bourgeois intellectuals, such as the Flores Magón brothers and their Partido Liberal Mexicano, who had begun to agitate for the overthrow of the dictatorship.

Díaz, faced with the wave of discontent, took advantage of selective cooptation to avoid the formation of authentic proletarian organizations. A case in point was the president of the Gran Círculo de Obreros Libres (Great Circle of Free Workers) founded in Río Blanco in 1906, José Morales,

who worked closely with the Díaz's government, and it is not unreasonable to assume that Morales benefitted greatly from this arrangement. An incident pointing to this conclusion took place when a group of workers, who had accused Morales of selling out to Díaz, "set [his home] on fire. Evidently those responsible intended to include Morales as well, but forewarned, he escaped" (Anderson, 1976:161). The important inference to be drawn here is perhaps that the phenomenon of charrismo,<sup>4</sup> usually associated with the working class leadership of the 1940s, had its precursors in the early workers' organizations. It is certainly not surprising that Díaz seeing his empire totter would try to restore "law and order" and the pax porfiriana not only through repression but also through selective cooptation. However, cooptation was quite limited and the repressive methods more frequently used combined with the rigid supervision to which the workers were subjected, prevented the formation of strong, combative, independent labor unions and led to the eventual destruction of the Gran Círculo de Obreros Libres.

But not only the peasants and workers were dissatisfied with the existing régime. Over the years of Porfirian rule inter-elite rivalries had developed which Díaz at first skillfully manipulated to keep potential competitors divided among themselves and to strengthen his own position as arbiter of such struggles. Yet monopolistic pricing and political favoritism had hurt many elite families blocking the advance not only for middle class sectors but also for some elements from the upper class. The científicos, who exercised control over national economic policy, faced opposition from groups of state governors and their supporters, most of whom were also important landowners and businessmen. The petty bourgeoisie

-- commercial farmers, medium-sized businessmen and merchants, professionals and intellectuals -- most often did not oppose the system itself, but their grievances were with the way the system operated (Anderson, 1976:243).

Furthermore, the severe economic crises at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th had weakened the economy. Silver had begun to fall in the international market as early as 1871, resulting in the decline of the price for Mexican silver and the corresponding devaluation of the Mexican silver peso (Cumberland, 1968:230-231). Severe droughts, famine, and typhus epidemics during the years from 1892 to 1895 added a series of economic reversals to the slump in the silver market (Cockcroft, 1968:20). The world depression of 1900-1901 ended the golden age of exporting; the readjustment of monetary policies from the silver to the gold standard in 1905 combined with the end of protectionism for Mexican manufactured goods led to inflationary effects on the price of imported goods, adding to the inflation in the domestic market, which merchants and businessmen blamed on the administration's monetary changes and on the monolithic pricing habits of the foreign-dominated export-import firms (Anderson, 1976:243). For the Mexican worker the living standard declined drastically. Real wages were lower than they had been a century earlier (Quirk, 1960:2; Cumberland, 1968:224); industrial unemployment rose, partly due to technological innovations and partly to the adverse effects of the recession; the mines and haciendas laid off workers, and the United States sent back the braceros. The international crisis of 1907-1909 translated into the failure of many small enterprises, since the banks not only refused to extend short-term credits but also

recalled old loans and foreclosed on outstanding mortgages. A wave of strikes inundated the country, and when Mexican workers sought redress of their problems, they found themselves among strange allies -- all those who wanted to see the old dictator out of office.

Surprisingly, during his last days in office, don Porfirio "offered to Congress a far reaching reform program that included the prohibition of reelection, important judicial reforms, and even the division of the large, rural estates. At the same time, Díaz resumed the policy of direct intervention into labor disputes and showed considerable interest in workers' grievances" (Anderson, 1976:296). However, the old dictator found the recipe for pacification through social reforms too late. The growing tide against his régime could not be stopped any more.

The armed struggle against the Díaz' government did not last long partly because of the generalized discontent of the population including sectors from the upper class, and partly because of the poor conditions in which the enlisted men of the Federal Army were found. Over 50 percent of the conscripts were Indians, the rest was composed of beggars, vagabonds, and criminals. Neither Díaz nor the army officers saw it necessary to improve the wretched living conditions of the troops. Ammunition and armaments functioned poorly; the army had been reduced to 20,000 men in 1910 from 35,000 in 1900. The soldiers did not feel great loyalty towards the Porfirian state, and when they were confronted with battle they deserted in great numbers (Lieuwen, 1968:12).

The Civil War, 1910-1917

Are you here to tell me that we no longer have land or greatness? That others have taken from us what we have taken from others?

Carlos Fuentes, The Death of Artemio Cruz

Perhaps the most clearly defined program for the Mexican Revolution had been that proposed by the Flores Magón brothers and the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM, Mexican Liberal Party). The program was the expression of the three non-privileged classes of Diaz' society: the peasants, the workers and the petty bourgeoisie. Three distinct ideologies converged in the program. The peasants demanded the restitution of their lands; the workers expressed utopic socialist and anarchistic ideals; the petty bourgeoisie upheld liberalism in its various aspects (Calderón, 1972:180-181). In addition, the magonistas had realized that a purely political revolution, as advocated by Madero and later the Constitutionalists, would not bring social reforms to the masses. Thus, they agitated for social revolution during the wave of strikes which swept the Porfiriato in the first decade of the 20th century. However, the magonista movement failed to take root among the lower classes, because their radical propositions<sup>5</sup> led to heavy repression and the prohibition to circulate the magonista newspapers Regeneración and Revolución in working class circles. In addition, the prohibition by law to form labor unions and the strict supervision the workers were subjected to all explain "in great measure why the 'Mexican workers did not more openly and actively support the revolutionary efforts of the PLM'" (Hernández, 1977:51).

The pattern of division between the social revolutionaries and the

political reformists, which had been established by the precursor movement, would never be overcome. Francisco I. Madero at first supported the PLM but he left it in 1906 since in his mind it had become too revolutionary. His family's great economic interests in mining, farming, commerce, industry and banking were obviously at stake. He became actively involved in political affairs in 1909 with the Anti-Reelectionist movement, a time when most of the PLM radicals had been imprisoned, exiled or otherwise eliminated. Only after he had experienced imprisonment himself did he finally see the need for armed struggle, but he never renounced his belief that Mexico's immense problems could be resolved only by a return to the laws of the liberal constitution of 1857. When, after Díaz' defeat in 1911, Madero had become the new President of Mexico in the first and last truly democratic election he stated that the object of the revolution had not been to solve the agrarian problem but rather to reconquer liberty, and he proceeded to proclaim all agrarian revolutionaries robbers. "We will resolve the agrarian problem in Mexico with the plow and not with the gun," the first apostle said. "The cry which will awaken the Mexican people is 'liberty' and not 'land'" (Los Presidentes de México, 1966:587).

As a result, Madero gained the immediate opposition of the agrarians and the armed struggle continued. Bourgeois reformism was not what most Mexicans had fought for. Nevertheless, the armies of Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Villa, Carranza and Alvaro Obregón united temporarily to fight against the remnants of the Porfirian society, who under Victoriano Huerta had staged a major comeback and had deposed Madero. These battles began to politicize the rank and file. Imperceptibly a national and class



consciousness emerged. However, this incipient consciousness did not crystallize into an army along class lines.

Once Huerta was defeated in 1914 the old divisions between reformists and revolutionaries broke open again and warfare continued. Carranza wanted to establish a society similar to the European and North American model of democratic capitalism. For Zapata the question revolved around the return of the land to the peasants who had lost it during the Porfiriato. For Villa, in the North, the division of the latifundia became the most important issue. The three major fighting factions were now composed of the peasants' Liberation Army of the South under the command of Zapata, the Division of the North under Villa, and the middle class-led Constitutionalist armies of Obregón and Carranza.

The Zapatistas restricted their fighting to the local areas in Morelos proclaiming land tenure problems as their banner and greatly ignoring the problems of the industrial working class. The Villistas at first had not been quite as progressive as the forces of Zapata, but their alliance with the Zapatistas helped to radicalize them. Their forces were made up of various migrant workers, miners, foremen of large estates and independent small farmers, whose interests centered more around commercial matters rather than the agrarian reform objectives of the landless peasantry. Moreover, even though the Zapatistas and Villistas were politically united, the fact that they were geographically separated weakened their impact. Furthermore, the Constitutionlists recognized that the conflict had turned into a class war and hastened to make the peasants' and workers' cause their own. Carranza's agrarian and labor reform decrees of 1914 and 1915, which he added to his otherwise sterile

Plan de Guadalupe, aided greatly in the recruitment of peasants and workers to the Constitutionalist program. The fact that Carranza's agrarian decree surpassed Zapata's Plan de Ayala was a strategic factor which neutralized Villismo and Zapatismo and helped the Constitutionalists to win.

The fate of the Zapatistas and Villistas was sealed, when in 1915 Obregón persuaded the Casa del Obrero Mundial (COM, House of the World Worker) to fight at the side of the Constitutionalists against the "reactionary" forces of Zapata and Villa. For the Constitutionalists their survival and the survival of a bourgeois order was at stake.

The COM, which had been founded in 1912 to serve as a workers' council for organizational, educational, cultural and propaganda activities, had furnished the Constitutionalists with six "red battalions" to eliminate the Zapatistas and Villistas. Yet their final goal was to wipe out the political revolution of the Constitutionalists and to initiate the social revolution (Alonso, 1972:22). The COM allied with the Constitutionalists rather than with Villa's and Zapata's forces, because the majority of the COM members felt no common bonds with either the Villistas or the Zapatistas. In fact, COM members were rather suspicious of them. Villa in the North was too far removed and unknown; moreover, he had not very much to offer to the urban working class. The COM had more sympathy for the Zapatistas; however, the Casa's "rationalists" felt repelled by the peasants' humility, religious devotion and the acceptance of the clergy. Furthermore, the COM interpreted the pact with the "bourgeois" Constitutionalists as a contract which permitted them to organize workers' councils and syndicates throughout the country. They believed that when

they had accomplished that they would be strong enough to confront the Constitutionalist government. The Casa represented 50,000 workers nationwide which contributed to the feeling that they were in control (Hart, 1978:13). Still, the COM was too optimistic concerning its strength vis-à-vis the Constitutionalists. As its members painfully found out, after the defeat of the Villistas and Zapatistas it was their turn to be crushed. On January 13, 1916 Carranza dissolved the Casa's "red battalions" and after two general strikes, which had paralyzed Mexico City, Carranza declared martial law. On August 2, 1916, he proclaimed the COM subversive and outlawed it.

The battles of 1915 to 1916 eliminated also most of the generals loyal to Zapata and Villa leaving Mexico's future in the hands of the reformists whose most important task was the reconstruction of the country and the political pacification and control of all those forces who had fought in the hope to better their socio-economic and political position in society. Strong demands in that respect came from the Constitutionalist generals who wanted to be included in the political decision-making or else threatened with renewed fighting. This in turn initiated the strong arm politics of Carranza in an effort to neutralize the revolutionary caudillos. In addition, Carranza maintained the armed forces as one of the most important supports of state power in contrast to Zapata and Villa who both rejected the regular army and wanted it substituted by popular militias (Boils, 1975:55; Gilly, 1971:68-69).

The war had shut down industries, many of the great haciendas had been ruined, the Federal Army had been defeated and the ancien régime of the Porfiriato had been destroyed, but not the basic structure of society,

as will be explained later.

In 1916 the victorious generals called a Constitutionalist Congress in Querétaro which culminated in the proclamation of a new constitution on February 5, 1917. This Magna Carta was the first in the world to recognize the rights of the peasants and workers in articles 27 and 123.

The Constitution of 1917

In Mexico we have the best Constitution in the world, and some day it will become a reality.

A Mexican

Article 27 of the new Constitution restored the national territories including the subsoil to the Mexican nation. This implied the expropriation of all foreign properties, as long as it was done for the cause of public utility and through indemnification. The Constitution also called for the division of latifundia to establish ejidos<sup>6</sup> and Indian communities, to develop small agrarian properties, and to create new agrarian population centers. Only Mexicans, either born in Mexico or naturalized, and Mexican societies were allowed to acquire land or to obtain concessions for the exploitation of lands, mines, and waters (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1976:38-56). Moreover, Article 27 stated specifically that

the ownership of lands and waters found within the limits of national territory corresponds originally to the Nation, which has had and has the right to transmit ownership to individuals to constitute private property. ... The Nation owns all natural resources found in the national territory and the waters surrounding the islands. ... the ownership by the Nation is inalienable and imprescriptible and the exploitation, use or benefit of the resources by individuals or corporations (sociedades constituidas) ... can only be

realized through concessions, granted by the Federal Executive, in agreement with the rules and conditions established by law (op.cit., 1976:38-42).

Thus, the Constitution incorporated the heavy anti-imperialist sentiments of the Revolution, but nowhere did it attack private property. Private property, in fact, was to become the motor of capitalist development. It also strengthened the power of the Federal Executive without precedent, since he was the only person to determine who was to receive how much and what kind of property.

The genesis of the much celebrated but in real life greatly ignored article 123 owed much to the efforts of a group of reformists surrounding General Alvaro Obregón. This article included most of the labor reforms the Flores Magón group had proposed in the PLM program of 1906.<sup>7</sup> But, like the Constitution as a whole, this article too suffered from the contradictions which had grown out of the Revolution. It contained such liberal notions as freedom to work, recognition of private property, the right of association for workers and employers, free contract, and it was permeated by a paternalistic attitude towards the working class. It also retained certain positivist aspects insofar as the article advocated protectionism for the workers implying that this class is by nature inferior to the employers' class. But the article also proclaimed some socialist propositions recognizing the division of society into classes. It defended the rights of the workers, and championed the right to strike, the right to unionize, etc.

Most importantly, however, article 123 defined the limits of the class struggle between workers and employers. It proclaimed economic reformism as the fundamental strategy of the workers' movement. The

middle class "revolutionaries" understood that the prosperity of a national capitalist class would depend directly on the material betterment of the working class. The more money workers had to spend, the more consumption of products would increase, and the higher would be the profit returns.

More specifically, Article 123 granted the workers the right to share the profits of the enterprises but only by means of

a National Commission, consisting of representatives of the workers, the employers and the Government [which] will establish the percentage of the profits to be divided among the workers.

The National Commission ... will take into consideration the necessity to foment the industrial development of the country. ... The right of the workers in profit sharing does not imply the power to intervene in the direction or administration of the enterprises....

The laws will recognize as a right of workers and employers strikes and lock-outs....

The strikes will be legal when the object is to obtain the equilibrium between the diverse factors of production, harmonizing the rights of labor with the rights of capital.... Strikes will be considered illegal only when the majority of the strikers exercise violent acts against persons or properties....

The differences or conflicts between labor and capital will be subject to the decisions of a Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, formed equally of representatives of the workers and employers, and one representative of the Government (op.cit., 1976:163-167).

Theoretically, the workers were almost en par with the employers with the exception of participation in the direction and administration of businesses. However, the condescending and paternalistic attitude of the government is very well expressed in the fact that it reserved for itself the power of arbitration in labor-capital conflicts. The establishment of tripartite bodies (labor-capital-government), such as the National Commission and the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration presupposed

benevolent and impartial governments, under the best of circumstances a wishful dream. However, they gave the Federal Executive absolute power over the fundamental social classes -- workers and employers -- as the "supreme arbiter" of their conflicts.

Even though conventional wisdom proclaims the 1917 Constitution radical for its time, it could be argued that had the composition of those attending the Querétaro Congress been more representative, the Magna Carta might have turned into a truly revolutionary document. But with the publication of the September 14 decree prohibiting candidacy to any person who had "aided with arms or served public office under the governments or factions hostile to the constitutionalist cause" (Cumberland, 1968:259) any trace of a truly representative constituent assembly vanished. This decree denied participation to all Magonistas, Zapatistas, Villistas as well as to those who had fought on the side of Victoriano Huerta. As a result the constitutional debates were discussed on a very limited ideological base. The conservative Carrancistas proposed legal reforms but opposed labor legislation; the traditional liberals perceived the rights of workers only as an individual guarantee; the Jacobins identified more or less with the traditional liberals (Leñero Otero, 1963:84). What predominated among "moderate liberals" and "Jacobins" alike was a strong consensus regarding "the role of the state in mediating the class conflicts of a capitalist society and defending national interests against external political and economic pressures" (North, 1978:238). The basic feature of the new Constitution was that through it the Carranza-Obregón coalition created a new model for the continued development of capitalism. It differed from the 1857 Constitution mainly insofar as it took into account

the rights of the peasants and workers, conditions which the Revolution had imposed.

Overall, the 1917 Constitution was clear testimony to the contradictions prevailing among the Constitutionalist. Inspired partly by classical liberalism, it proposed the equality of all men (women excluded) before the law along with many other individual guarantees; it affirmed the sovereignty of the people, who exercised it through their elected representatives; it advocated the separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers; and it confirmed state and municipal autonomy united through a federal pact. However, it also furnished the president with the extraordinary power to introduce laws and issue decrees, to appoint and remove judicial authorities, and it subjected the states to the discretionary powers of the president, thus limiting their sovereignty (Constitución Política, 1976:passim). In sum, the 1917 Constitution delineated a representative democracy; it also established a constitutional dictatorship of the presidential variety legitimated by the political compromises with the peasants and the proletariat in articles 27 and 123 (Calderón, 1972:132-133); and it laid the foundations for the rise of an entire corporate structure (Leal, 1975c:55). Moreover, the formal democracy and the universal male suffrage thus established meant no more than the opportunity of "deciding once in ... six years which member of the [new] ruling class was to misrepresent the people in parliament" (Marx, 1958:520).



The Reconstruction of the State, 1917-1934

On May 1, 1917, the First Chief of the Constitutionalist Army, Venustiano Carranza, became the first post-revolution President. He turned the new political style into a compromise between Porfirian positivism and Madero's mystical liberalism (Córdova, 1973:191). Carranza, like Madero, had never favored legislated social reforms or the breaking up of large estates, possibly because he belonged to the landowning class himself. He ignored greatly the promises for agrarian reform, and labor did not fare better. Worsening economic conditions -- depreciated paper currency, high unemployment, decreasing agricultural production, increasing rise in food prices -- caused workers as well as public employees in many parts of the country to strike. Despite the constitutional right to do so, Carranza's reaction was to call in military contingents to repress lower and middle class strikes alike. Conceding the right to strike to public employees meant to him "the absurd idea of recognizing the strike of the state against the state" (Los Presidentes, 1966:639-643). He even invoked an old law of 1862, which asked for the death penalty for everybody inciting, defending and sustaining strike action (Clark, 1934:39-42). In no way was Carranza inclined to permit the working class to set itself up as a power in the country.

Opposition to Carranza's government developed fast from disillusioned peasants, workers, and various sectors of the middle class, as well as from disappointed generals. Carranza, in an effort to form a national army, had tried to break down the local loyalties to generals, which had arisen during the years of armed struggle. War Minister Obregón dissolved the

major Constitutionalist armies of division strength and brought most of the division generals under his direct command. He retired 30,000 officers and inaugurated a new officer training school to professionalize the army (Lieuwen, 1968:45-48).

The retirement of so many officers was not taken lightly by the army commanders; neither was Carranza's interference in state elections, nor his suggestion of a civilian, Ignacio Bonillas, to become next president.

Obregón, in the meantime, had skillfully secured the support of the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM, Regional Mexican Workers Confederation) through its small and select inner circle, the Grupo Acción. The CROM, founded in Saltillo in 1918, became a confederation of all Mexican labor unions and replaced the Casa del Obrero Mundial. The establishment of the CROM was an attempt by the Carranza government to control the labor movement. In 1919 the Grupo Acción formed the Partido Laborista Mexicano (PLM, Mexican Labor Party) whose sole purpose was to support Obregón's presidential candidacy against Carranza's protégé, Bonillas, who was exceedingly unpopular with practically all groups of any importance. The PLM entered into a written pact with Obregón promising its support in return for a position of preference in his future government. "This agreement, in common with many others made in following years between the Labor Party and politicians, was kept a secret from the masses of workers" (Clark, 1935:73). In fact, the policies of the CROM were decided by their leaders, Luis N. Morones, Celestino Gasca and the Grupo Acción, who opted for the government's program of "harmonizing" capital and labor rather than destroying capitalism.

The pre-election campaign saw Mexico strongly divided again. The

Obregonistas were in a good position since they had the majority in Congress. Moreover, Obregón was the popular as well as the military choice for President. Carranza's interference in state politics had generated the opposition of Adolfo de la Huerta, Plutarco Elías Calles and other powerful generals of the Revolution. In their Plan de Agua Prieta they accused Carranza of having made a mockery of the popular vote and of repeatedly assaulting the sovereignty of the states.

General Pablo González, whose "embryonic militarism was more hateful than that of the Porfiriato" (Salazar, 1972:189), had no chance of winning the contest since his support came from clergymen, hacendados, and foreign investors, the same groups which had backed Díaz. Moreover, many of those officers and generals who had just lost their positions quickly joined the military uprising against Carranza in 1920, in which the First Chief got fatally wounded. Adolfo de la Huerta became interim President.

The United States, interested in preserving their huge enterprises in Mexico, started to pressure the Mexican government to accept certain conditions in return for recognition. Mexico was to establish the damages suffered by foreigners during the Revolution; the U.S. demanded the non-enforcement of the provisions of article 27 of the 1917 Constitution and Mexico's recognition and service of its foreign debt. De la Huerta, however, insisted that his government should be recognized prior to the acceptance of such conditions, and he did so with the hearty approval of both Obregón and Calles, Mexico's future strongmen.

On December 1, 1920 Alvaro Obregón was elected President. He was the first who did not carry with him the ideological ballast of the Porfiriato. He was not afraid of the masses, and he used them for his own benefit.

When in 1920 Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama and Aurelio Manrique, two radicals who had survived the Revolution, founded the Partido Nacional Agrarista (PNA, National Agrarian Party), they did so with Obregón's full support. The acknowledged purpose of the PNA was, similar to that of the Partido Laborista Mexicano, to support Obregón in exchange for radical land distribution. To prevent that either the PNA or the PIM would threaten his position, Obregón set them as rival groups against each other (Huizer, 1970:39).

While Obregón agreed with agrarian reform he also urged going about it cautiously. Being a landowner himself, he did not favor the destroying of large estates to create numerous small properties. He justified his attitude saying that "we would put to flight foreign capital, which at this moment we need more than ever" (Dulles, 1961:96). By placing the onus for his delaying tactics on possible foreign intervention, thus fanning the flames of anti-imperialism, he continued to enjoy agrarian and labor support. Nevertheless, to remain in power and to pacify politically rebellious peasants he distributed about 1,200,000 hectares to some 100,000 peasants (Gutelman, 1971:89). But these distributions were by far not enough to satisfy the land-hunger of all peasants.

For the first time in its history the labor movement received open governmental support. Soon, however, relations between the CROM, which drew closer to Calles, cooled off, and Obregón depended more on the PNA. The CROM was disappointed because Obregón did not establish the promised Labor Department. Labor legislation had been under the jurisdiction of state governments, and whether workers were allowed to enjoy the rights and privileges granted them by the Constitution depended greatly on the

political ideology of the state governors.

While the CROM was the major labor central at the time it never managed to control completely the working class movement. In 1921 the Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT, General Workers' Confederation) was founded by those sectors loyal to the anarcho-syndicalist tradition of the Casa del Obrero Mundial. The CGT became the declared enemy of the CROM, constantly denouncing the corruption of CROM leaders as well as their political connections with the state. "The position of the CGT was very radical in the political context of the epoch, even though the opposition it presented to the government was weak" (Reyna, et al., 1976:32-33).

Miners and railroad workers also resisted integration into the CROM. However, since its leaders had received lucrative government positions -- Celestino Gasca had become governor of the Federal District and Luis Morones had received the directorship of the Military Manufacturing Establishments -- it was in a position to impose its hegemony and to crush those unions which opposed it. Only strikes called by the CROM were legal, all others the CROM leadership repressed.

The most immediate threat to Obregón's government came -- just as during Carranza's régime -- from the army. Carrancista generals and those loyal to Pablo González continued to menace his régime provoking another purge of the army. Obregón exiled the more dangerous generals and set up military-agricultural colonies to help the discharged officers and men to relocate. He replaced military state governors with loyal civilians and overhauled the curriculum of the Colegio Militar to provide professional training in an attempt to reduce the political ambitions of the officers (Lieuwen, 1968:62-70). In addition, Obregón reverted to corruption within the high

command to take power away from military caudillos and to orchestrate and finance political alliances (Boils, 1975:60).

To secure recognition of his government by the United States and European nations, Obregón promised the petroleum companies not to confiscate their properties under the pretext that the Constitution did not state specifically that land acquired before 1917 could be retroactively expropriated. He promised frank hospitality to foreign investors assuring them that damages suffered during the revolution would be paid for and that all estates taken away by former governments would be returned to their previous owners. During the Bucareli conferences in 1923, Obregón declared paragraph IV of article 27 of the 1917 Constitution non-retroactive and arranged various pending questions between Mexico and the United States concerning damages suffered by U.S. nationals during the Revolution. As Obregón saw it: "The basic problem of Mexico is the economic and moral betterment of the people in harmony with the foreign interests which have their roots in the country" (Los Presidentes, 1966: 667).

Thus, Obregón not only tried to "harmonize" capital and labor on a national level, but he also believed that foreign industrialists would "harmonize" their efforts with the Mexican working class as long as they adhered to the laws of the country. What he did not realize or did not want to realize, perhaps, was that he renewed the Porfirian policy of open doors for foreign capital with all its detrimental consequences for the Mexican economy, such as profit outflow, monopolization of industries in the hands of foreigners, price-fixing, low employment through labor-saving technology, increasing foreign and national public debt, trade deficits, etc.

When the question of presidential succession opened up again in 1923 the "triangle" from Sonora -- Obregón, Calles, and de la Huerta -- thought it was Calles' turn to be President. After some deliberation, however, de la Huerta, convinced by his supporters, the Partido Cooperatista, the CGT and the railway unions, and some of the generals retired by Obregón, decided to run for the presidency as well. De la Huerta's electoral support was not strong enough, so he turned to insurrection accusing Obregón essentially of the same charges Obregón had levelled against Carranza. However, the PNA supported Calles' presidential candidacy and recruited peasants to fight against de la Huerta; the CROM, whose leaders had a lot to gain should Calles be next President, organized workers' battalions against the insurrectionists. Thus, again with the support of the popular classes the rebels were defeated, and Calles was "elected" President of the Republic.

Calles was deeply preoccupied with the resolution of problems, such as the balancing of the budgets, the continued reorganization of the army, the diffusion of public schooling, industrial and agricultural development, control of social movements, and the reaction from the Church. As early as 1925 he set about to eliminate the cumulative federal deficit, which he managed to achieve. He reorganized fiscal methods giving the central government more control over such matters as taxation and established income taxes on a firm basis. On August 31, 1925 he inaugurated the Banco de México to stimulate economic activities, and he reestablished Mexico's credit abroad. All of these measures did much for his and the nation's prestige (Dulles, 1961:282-288). He, furthermore, formed the Comisión

Nacional de Irrigación to establish small properties and to develop and augment agricultural production. For Calles the redistribution of land had not only a utilitarian end, but it was also a political move to pacify the peasantry. He had in mind to fashion a peasant middle class which would become a buffer between the ejidatarios, of whom he did not think very much, and the large landholders, whose power he tried to break (Los presidentes, 1966:686). The ejidos remained greatly neglected. The growing discontent in the countryside obliged Calles to grant about 3 million hectares to the peasants, just about three times as much as Carranza and Obregón together had distributed (Gutelman, 1971:97).

The period from 1924 to 1928 was the CROM's golden age. Luis N. Morones became Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor, and was, apart from the President and War Minister Joaquín Amaro, the most powerful person in Mexico. He crushed mercilessly those unions which tried to retain some independence from the CROM. Strike action decreased because of the CROM's conciliatory attitude towards employers. But by 1926 Calles had built himself a business empire and his former radicalism turned into conservatism. He felt he did not need labor's support any longer, and his relations with the CROM cooled. In 1927 he established by decree the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration,<sup>8</sup> thereby diminishing Morones' power.

Turning to Church matters, for the first time a post-revolution President enforced the anticlerical provisions of articles 3 and 130 of the 1917 Constitution. Article 3 required that primary, secondary and normal education be secular, and article 130 severely limited the power of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1926 the Archbishop of Mexico declared that



the Church would not abide by the Constitution. Consequently, Calles closed Church schools, turned monasteries into public schools, deported a great number of foreign priests and nuns, and required all Mexican priests to register with civil authorities. As a result the Church officials withdrew their services. Late in 1926 and early 1927 the clergy took up arms in the so-called Cristero Revolt to fight against threatening "atheistic Bolsheviks" in government. The Cristeros were soon defeated and even the Pope ordered the Mexican clergy to obey the law (Meyer, 1974).

The most important effect of the Cristero Revolt on the Mexican labor movement was that it further confused the real issues behind capital and labor. The Church was blamed for the material backwardness of the country and the economic and social problems of the working class. While this is certainly partially true, it resulted in further disorientation of the labor movement adding to the retarding effects of corrupt leadership and violent repression.

Calles, too, was faced with rebellious generals. It was impossible to depoliticize those who had been politicized by the Epic Revolution. Calles, too, thought it wise to buy the generals' loyalty by setting them up as businessmen and landowners. His War Minister, Joaquín Amaro, continued to streamline the army and placed a 55,000 men limit on conscripts. He increasingly used troops in public work projects, thus reducing the military budget. He promulgated four new laws, which limited the mission of the army to the defense of the nation from internal and external threats; introduced competitive exams for promotion; requested the loyalty of the soldier to the nation and not to local caudillos; and provided for retirement and pensions (Lieuwen, 1968:87-88). In addition, Calles and Amaro

rotated the zone commanders to guard against discontented generals who in this manner were easier subjected to presidential control (Boils, 1975:64).

In spite of his rhetoric that "Mexicans must know that this land is theirs" and that "foreigners will not enjoy privileges in Mexico" (Los Presidentes, 1966:683-690), Calles felt that he could not under any circumstances break the ties with the United States. He wanted to maintain political independence thinking that in that way he could control foreign economic penetration, which he felt was necessary if Mexico were to develop materially. However, he did not seem to understand, or perhaps he did not care because of his vast business interests and his connections with foreign enterprises, that the cumulative effects of dependence on foreign capital and technology would seriously undermine Mexico's industrial development. Thus, a new dependency was consolidated, and the United States found out that the Mexican Revolution had not affected negatively its dominance in that area.

When the question of presidential succession arose in 1927 the country was sharply divided again. Obregón felt he was the only logical candidate to succeed Calles, and his supporters in Congress, which by far outnumbered his opposition, set about to modify the Constitution to allow reelection. The Constitution was amended to include reelection after one full term out of office, and to increase the length of term from four to six years. Many were upset over the changes which smacked of the Porfirian system they had fought so hard to smash.

Morones turned against Obregón, because he feared for very good reasons that he would lose his vast powers should Obregón be reelected.

Generals Arnulfo Gómez and Francisco R. Serrano, thinking it was their turn to be rewarded with the Presidency, rose in revolt. But Calles and Obregón had anticipated the uprising and the insurrectionists were soon defeated. "Amaro's reorganization and reform program had successfully met the first test. The army, despite the defection of 28 generals, had sustained the government. All opposition candidates had been eliminated and Obregón was elected president" (Lieuwen, 1968:99). Obregón, however, did not enjoy his success for a long time. On July 17, 1928, at a banquet at "La Bombilla" in San Angel he was shot. Obregonistas blamed Calles' and Morones' elements for Obregón's death, although a connection could never be proved.

As interim President, Calles suggested Emilio Portes Gil, who immediately declared war on Morones, the CROM, and the Labor Party. The police and army which Morones had used so freely to build the CROM were now equally freely used to destroy it. Many unions, which had been forced to join the CROM, eagerly split from it. Morones lost his position as Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor, the CROM did not receive the financial support from the government any longer, and it started to wither away.

Portes Gil did not slow down agrarian reform against the advice of Calles and U.S. Ambassador Dwight D. Morrow. He explained that the distribution of land was the only way to guarantee peasant support in the event of another military uprising. Therefore, he granted more than one million hectares to peasants during his short time in office.

Concerning the industrial working class, Portes Gil advocated a new labor law, which would take labor legislation out of the hands of state governors. The Código del Trabajo was to establish at the national level

an "equilibrium" between the two factors of production -- capital and labor. It was to synthesize the rights of industry and the obligations of the workers. "We have said no to the proposition that the unions enslave the industrialists," said don Emilio. "The worker will be responsible.... We ask the industrialists that they, without renouncing the rights of the workers, organize so that together they contribute to the development of Mexican industry" (Los Presidentes, 1966:706). Clearly, no post-Revolution government was prepared to grant the popular classes more than limited reforms. Yet, each succeeding régime had to reckon with the workers and dared not ignore them completely. Additionally, the world depression of 1929, during which lower class agitation rose, forced the government to take action in favor of the peasantry and industrial working class to avoid rebellions from that sector. The depression shrank the country's foreign trade to little more than half its previous volume. The drastic decline of exports resulted in the deterioration of the terms of trade; manufacturing experienced reverses; unemployment, particularly in agriculture and mining, went up; the U.S. again expelled the braceros; and the living standard of the masses plummeted into new depths. North and Raby wrote that unemployment struck most severely precisely those sectors which were highly unionized and thus most developed in terms of political consciousness (1977:32). This development occurred at a time when Calles had proclaimed that agrarian reform had ended. In the context of the still pending issues of the Revolution this announcement provoked great hostilities, and many new radical agrarian leagues sprang up and strikes proliferated.

The most important single event concerning the restructuring of the

country was Calles' initiative to form the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR, National Revolutionary Party) in 1929. It emerged at a time of crisis of legitimacy of the new system provoked by the death of Obregón. Calles' idea was to form "democratic institutions" to substitute for the government of the caudillos. The PNR sought to bring together at the national level the local and regional power blocks which repeatedly had threatened the central power, thereby strengthening the federal government and providing an institutional framework for the peaceful transmission of power from one President to the next. Or as North and Raby put it so succinctly, the PNR was "to maintain political stability by mediating conflicts within the emerging ruling class, and between it and representatives of the masses" (1977:33). Moreover, the power of the military within the political bureaucracy had been reduced to the status of a pressure group. However, the new institution soon developed into the most formidable dual structure of contemporary Mexico -- the party and the presidency. Octavio Paz explains that the PNR "established ... the dictatorship of the group that won in the struggle among factions....Although it was not a seed of democracy, it was the beginning of a national political structure, tightly bound to the new state" (1972:24-25). For the first time in 1929 a candidate for President was chosen by the Party, after careful selection by Calles, who in actuality continued to govern Mexico behind the curtains during the interim presidency of Emilio Portes Gil, and the presidencies of Pascual Ortiz Rubio and Abelardo Rodríguez. This led to the term Maximato for the period from 1928 to 1934.

Still, some dissident generals under the command of José Gonzalo Escobar tried to stage a major comeback to avoid ignominious retirement

and complete political eclipse. This rebellion took place in Mexico's north along the U.S. border -- a strategic position because of the ease with which the generals could buy arms from the U.S. Almost one-third of the officers took part in the revolt. However, the government with the support of agrarian forces and superior military equipment and techniques defeated the rebellion. As in 1927, the rebel generals were either shot or exiled and the purge of the army continued.

The next President's (Pascual Ortiz Rubio) most important contribution to Mexican affairs was the promulgation of the Ley Federal del Trabajo<sup>9</sup> in 1931 and the decree which ended the juicio de amparo by landowners to postpone or to avoid the expropriation of their land. After many disagreements with Calles concerning agrarian reform and other policies, Ortiz Rubio resigned. His successor, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, one of the "millionaires of the Revolution," put into effect a left-leaning Six-Year-Plan which the PNR had adopted in 1933 because of popular pressures. The Plan reclaimed the reformist principles of the Mexican Revolution and rescued the right of the state to regiment social life and to restore its political and juridical capacity to intervene in the social relations of production, and to promote the cultural and material betterment of the masses (Córdova, 1974:45-47). Rodríguez fixed a minimum wage for the working class; he founded an autonomous Agrarian Department and continued the distribution of land, however, at a much slower pace than Portes Gil's efforts. Whereas Portes Gil stepped up agrarian reform and dispensed more than one million hectares, Rodríguez, much more under the influence of the Jefe Máximo, turned over to the peasants about 189,000 hectares during his last year in office (Gutelman, 1971:97-98). Still, agrarian reform remained highly

unsatisfactory since most of the land distributed was of poor quality, and therefore it was of no great use to the latifundia. Furthermore, 76 per cent of the parcels were smaller than 10 hectares.

#### The Consolidation of the State, 1934-1940

Conozco mis obligaciones y no me olvido de mi origen. Pertenezco a la misma clase que ustedes. Fuí, antes que hombre público, obrero de un modesto taller y leal a mi clase, que fué la que me elevó al poder.

I know my obligations and I do not forget my origin. I belong to the same class as you. I was, before I became a public figure, a worker of a modest workshop, and I was loyal to my class which brought me to power.

Lázaro Cárdenas in Guanajuato, 1936

The election of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934 was the reflection of a deep crisis which had befallen Mexico. The country was sharply divided and the political mood had turned towards the left. As governor of Michoacán Cárdenas had gained the respect of labor and the peasants. During his election campaign, which brought him to the remotest corners of the country, he won the support and confidence of the masses on a national level. Moreover, he was favored by most generals.

Cárdenas, even though he had been Calles' preference, soon showed his independence from the Jefe Máximo. He dismissed all the judges appointed by Portes Gil and replaced them with his own men. He asked all cabinet ministers, most of whom were Callistas, to resign and substituted his own ministers loyal to him (Dulles, 1961:607, 643).

Meanwhile, Calles and Morones had repeatedly attacked the labor move-

ment and the stepped-up division of lands. Consequently, they had lost so much popular support that when Cárdenas finally told them to leave the country, they did so without much ado. Their control of Mexico's masses had declined so monumentally that they knew any armed revolt would be useless and would only lead to defeat and death. Calles -- having turned to the perusing of "literature," such as Hitler's Mein Kampf -- Morones, and supporters departed from Mexico on April 10, 1936.

The Calles-Cárdenas' confrontation cannot be interpreted as a personal dispute. In it two clearly distinguishable political currents with opposing interests could be seen: Calles represented the most conservative sectors of the new industrial, banking and business class, which was tied closely to imperialist interests, whereas Cárdenas expressed the nationalist and reformist tendencies of the Six-Year Plan, supported by peasants, workers, and small and medium businesses.

With Calles and Morones out of the way, Cárdenas set out to organize the masses and to consolidate the work of the Revolution. He strove for a "social equilibrium based on just relations between capital and labor" insisting that the social movements "develop within the Law to obtain the economic advantages within the possibilities of the productive enterprises and with the protection of the government" (Los Presidentes, 1966:753). However, his approach went far beyond the necessary requisites established by his predecessors. His vision was "to resolve the contradictions between capital and labor with a most profound structural change which would make it possible to carry out the Constitution of the Republic" (Cárdenas, 1974: 753). In other words he neither advocated capitalism nor socialism, but something in between, which in his mind would be something specifically



Mexican and not a political model imposed from without the country. His philosophy in that respect was present in his response to a memorandum of the Confederación de Cámaras de Comercio. The document strongly criticized Cárdenas' policies regarding labor; it accused him of not abiding by the law; it censured as irrational the legislation which made worker-employer conflicts subject to obligatory arbitration; it attributed to the same legislation the increase of strikes and it presented those strikes as the cause of the disorganization of the economy (Los Presidentes, 1961:755). In his reply Cárdenas defended his concern for the popular classes asking the businessmen what they ever had done to improve the position of the masses. "Until today the authorities have not had the cooperation of either industry, the banks or the merchants. ... profit is still the only motive of the industrialists," he countered. Continuing his speech he pronounced his most famous and most quoted declaration that if businessmen were tired of the social struggle they may retire and the nation will be happy to take over their enterprises. Cárdenas, who had fought in the Mexican Revolution, understood that another

violent movement upsetting the established order would be fatal. Precisely, because I know, as revolutionary, in what circumstances the popular explosions occur, I recommend that the employers' class comply in good faith with the law, cease to intervene in the union movement of the workers, and give them the economic well being to which they have a right within the maximum possibilities of the enterprises; because oppression, industrial tyranny, unsatisfied necessities and suppressed rebellions are the explosives which in any given moment could bring the violent disturbances so feared by you (Los Presidentes, 1961:759-760).

From these excerpts four important aspects of Cárdenas' labor policies emerge: 1) the organization of the working class in one national central; 2) the effort to avoid the proliferation of "white" syndicates and all

manipulation by the employers to intervene in union affairs; 3) the right of the state to assume the role of arbiter of the national economy and to be the protector of the dispossessed classes; 4) the limitation of capital-labor conflicts to the economic capacity of the enterprises. Nowhere did Cárdenas see the need for the elimination of the capitalist class, but as a firm believer in the 1917 Constitution he opted for the "harmonization of capital and labor," a concept which was never clearly defined. From social realities, however, one can deduce that "harmonization" never meant that the producers of the nation's wealth would receive an equal share of the national income. However, Cárdenas did not let himself be intimidated by big business. For years the oil workers of the British and United States' owned oil companies had fought for uniformity of wages and contracts, taking as base the constitutional principle equal pay for equal work. Cárdenas had repeatedly intervened on behalf of the workers. The oil companies refused to give in and threatened to cut down oil production. Confronted with the intransigence of the owners of the oil companies, Cárdenas hit back:

Public Power sees itself besieged by the social interests of the Nation which would be the most affected, since an insufficient production of combustibles for the diverse activities of the country ... would paralyze the ... [economic] life ..., and the existence of the Government would be put in grave danger, since the lost economic power of the State would also mean losing political power ... (Los Presidentes, 1966:774).

On March 18, 1938 he declared expropriated for reasons of public utility and in favor of the nation all foreign-owned oil enterprises including equipment, buildings, refineries and the like. His courageous stand saved for Mexico its most valuable natural resource: oil.

The urban working class was still quite small, divided, and plagued

by ideological inconsistencies. The majority were self-employed artisans or ran family businesses. These enterprises tended to be small, except for those large centers of factory production in Mexico City, Puebla and Monterrey. Working class movements had arisen in particular localities, such as the railroads, the electrical sector, export-oriented manufacturing companies, and the oil industry, and had been quite isolated one from the other. Vicente Lombardo Toledano's CROM "depurada" (formed in 1933) and somewhat later his Confederación General de Obreros y Campesinos de México (CGOOCM, General Confederation of Workers and Peasants of Mexico) tried to rescue the working class cause seeking unity with a number of industrial unions. Lombardo Toledano and the CGOOCM pledged strong support for Cárdenas (Reyna & Miquet, 1976:41), and Cárdenas in return backed Lombardo Toledano's efforts towards unification. Thus, in February 1936 during the Congreso Nacional de Unificación Proletaria, Cárdenas encouraged the foundation of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México, (CTM, Confederation of Workers of Mexico), which united many important industrial unions with the exception of the CROM and the CGT, both of which remained largely margined. The CTM's position was at first quite radical, its theme being "for a society without classes." In its constitutive act it declared, among other principles, the workers' right to possess and control the instruments of production assuming that this could be carried out within the existing legal system. However, it did not propose any strategies or tactics as to how the instruments of production should pass into the hands of the producers. Thus, Cárdenas' support of workers' and peasants' movements reflected the ideological limitations and political weakness of these classes, as well as his paternalism towards them. He established workers'

cooperatives in the nationalized railroads and the oil enterprises which he had expropriated in 1938. Both the CTM and the Mexican Communist Party severely criticized these cooperatives reasoning that they operated within financially weak and inefficient businesses, thus damaging the workers and the nation more than advancing them. Furthermore, they argued, the cooperatives operating side by side with private property of the capitalist type would never lead to a socialist economy. Yet, Cárdenas, even though he advocated what he called "socialist education," never fostered socialist development. The Communist Party argued furthermore, that "the administration of the nationalized enterprises must remain in the hands of the State relying on the cooperation of the unions and a system of workers' control" (Velasco, 1974:30; author's emphasis), thereby distinguishing clearly between the limitations of workers' administration versus the importance of workers' control over the companies. Nevertheless, the program of the Mexican Communist Party never went much further than the goals set by Cárdenas (Velasco, 1939:passim).

Turning to the peasantry, Cárdenas untiringly proceeded to organize it as well. He distributed land as no other President before him had done. Altogether 815,138 peasants received a grand total of 17,890,577 hectares from 1935 to 1940 (Gutelman, 1971:109-110). Furthermore, he augmented agrarian credit, constructed irrigation works and roads, implanted modern systems of cultivation and founded cooperatives which eliminated the speculation of intermediaries. He particularly favored the ejidos hoping that the ejidal sector would become the predominant factor of the agrarian economy. This attitude he retained to the end of his life (Cárdenas, 1974: 216-219). In addition, he sent teachers into the remotest corners of the

country to disseminate socialist education. The life of these teachers was in constant danger, and many of them were assassinated by reactionary landowners.

Agrarian reform was most notable in the export-oriented and mainly foreign-owned enterprises in the Valle de Mexicali, Baja California; La Laguna in Coahuila-Durango; in the henequen zones of the Yucatán; in El Yaqui, Sonora; Lombardía and Nueva Italia in Michoacán. These areas were the most explosive and politically most conscious ejidal nuclei, and Cárdenas' decision to distribute land there and to channel agrarian credit into the newly established ejidos and small properties has been interpreted as pure demagoguery. However, North and Raby (1977:35) suggest factors which possibly prevented or limited agrarian reform in other areas of the country, such as the strength of traditional patrón-client relationships, the conservatism of small-holders, the rise of reactionary opposition both secular and of the Roman Catholic Church (sinarquismo) in several states of the center west, as well as a generational phenomenon, that is the older generation refused to take land as a gift. The criminal activity of fascist groups, such as Saturnino Cedillo's "Gold Shirts," which broke strikes, assassinated peasants, and beat up small Jewish merchants, demonstrated that Mexico was not outside of the international situation after the rise to power of Hitler in Germany. Yet, even though Cárdenas' national-reformist government was characterized by the most leftist positions of any government of that type, and without doubt it was the most progressive and democratic of the preceding and following Mexican governments and similar régimes in other countries, one cannot agree with North and Raby (1977), with all respect to their extensive research, that

Cárdenas may have turned to a more radical program and perhaps the planting of socialism had it not been for conservative opposition and the threat of imperialist intervention. Cárdenas never abandoned his faith in the 1917 Constitution and in the righteousness of its supreme laws (see Cárdenas, 1974:222). But the bourgeois character of the Constitution prohibited radicalism. The separation of the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC, National Peasant Confederation), founded in 1938, from the CTM was a move to prevent a strengthening and an eventual alliance of the popular classes; so was the separate unionization of the workers at the service of the state. In 1938 emerged the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (FSTSE, Federation of Workers' Unions at the Service of the State) in an attempt to free bureaucrats from the arbitrariness of state governors, and such corrupt practices as nepotism and favoritism. The FSTSE became in the 1940s the strongest supporting sector of the official party.

At the same time, Cárdenas attempted to gain the support of the military. He knew he had alienated many generals and to counteract their resentment he catered to the young officers and soldiers. He provided the enlisted men with better housing, schooling, raised their wages and granted them pensions. He was determined to render the generals powerless in politics. Too many had become too wealthy and therefore, naturally, began to oppose any further economic and social reforms. What Cárdenas intended to achieve was the executive's control over the high command of the military and its subordination to the state. Under Cárdenas the civil arm of the political bureaucracy finally assumed the hegemony of the state.

In addition, Cárdenas had also armed some peasants to defend the

President's accelerated land distribution program against attacks from generals and landowners (Gilly, 1971:355-356). He, furthermore, had organized a workers' militia, which on May Day 1938, "100,000 strong, paraded en masse through the streets of the capital. Prior to the parade, Cárdenas had warned in a speech that if reactionary forces in the army revolted, they would be obliged to fight these proletarian defenders of the regime" (Lieuwen, 1968:127).

The most important cause of the consolidation of the new state was the reorganization of the PNR into the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM, Party of the Mexican Revolution) and the subordination of some social groups to the new Party. The PRM brought together the CTM, the CNC, the public employees, as well as the army. The inclusion of the army administered the final coup to the generals and severely limited the military's political power. The creation of four sectors (CNC, CTM, public employees and the army) integrated into and controlled by the official party and the reduction of their influence to one out of four parts was Cárdenas' vision of assuring peace and by extension the continued economic development of Mexico. This arrangement, however, led to the political and ideological subjugation of the masses to the state, whereas capital was encouraged to profit and develop autonomously and independently, subject to Mexican laws. Perhaps Cárdenas should have organized a fifth sector -- private enterprise -- and integrated and subordinated it to the same controlling mechanisms of the PRM. Even though Cárdenas made it obligatory for private enterprise to join the Confederación Nacional de Cámaras de Comercio (CONCANACO, National Confederation of Chambers of Commerce) or the Confederación Nacional de Cámaras Industriales (CONCAMIN, National Confederation of

Industrial Chambers)<sup>10</sup> (Vernon, 1966:92), it nevertheless was allowed to develop outside the structure of the Party, thus having much more opportunity and freedom to use and manipulate the new institutions for its own benefit.

Notwithstanding, Mexico at last was organized, the new state consolidated, the army house-broken, the class conflict institutionalized, and the new institutions fostered the capitalist development of the economy and the control over the masses. Moreover, by 1940 the groundwork for rapid industrialization had been firmly established. Already during the Cárdenas' presidency, the volume of manufactured goods had grown as rapidly as it did during the following period of Manuel Avila Camacho's régime (Wilkie, 1967:265).

#### The Maturity of the State, 1940-1977

"Like wine, the Revolution would improve with age. Decidedly, we have passed the period of excesses."

Carlos Fuentes, The Good Conscience

The Second World War brought to Mexico a period of notable economic growth, since it created a tremendous demand for primary resources which translated into an acceleration of exports and an increased volume of foreign currency within the country. The war also stimulated a process of import substitution, which in turn gave rise to a program of greater national industrialization. The internal market grew, new jobs appeared, and the economy diversified. Thus, World War II contributed greatly to the consolidation of those mechanisms on which internal political stability rested.



From 1940 to 1970 the Gross National Product grew on the average more than six percent per year, whereas population increased by approximately 3.1 percent per year (Cordero Huerta, 1974:10; Córdova, 1977:15-16). Despite this high growth rate, wealth concentrated in the hands of the national industrial and financial sectors, as well as their foreign counterparts. In recent years this economic growth, which had not improved the lot of the masses, diminished to a mere 1.5 percent in 1977, whereas the population growth rate had remained more or less stable at 3.5 percent (Expansión, June 8, 1977:20).

The high GNP from 1940 to 1970 was also a direct result of the state's protectionist policies forging in an extraordinary manner the capitalist development of the economy to the detriment of the masses. Policies centered around industrialization with industrialists, financiers, and merchants receiving the greater benefits. The state maintained low wages and cheap transport and energy rates, continued the policies of tax exemption for foreign and national investors and controlled the union movement. Yet this process resulted in a gradual redefinition of the political and economic alliances. The state began to lose national control over industrialization. It passed into the hands of industrialists, who were supported by foreign capital and who began the consolidation of their economic power. Even though the political bureaucracy retains hegemony over economic matters, it is gradually losing it (Reyna, 1972:522). Until 1970 there seemed to exist a strong cohesion among the power bloque. Today, however, the state cannot accommodate the needs of monopoly capitalism within the needs for public spending any longer, and "the actual conditions of the international crisis introduce for the immediate future the perspec-

tive of sharp frictions within the dominant bloque" (Cordera, 1971:508).

Turning to agrarian matters, since 1940 the Mexican state has concentrated on heavy industrialization, because "the political system has ceased to be seen exclusively as an organism charged with the realization of the reforms recommended by the Revolution" (Córdova, 1977:12). The successors of Lázaro Cárdenas, Presidents Manuel Avila Camacho (1940-1946), Miguel Alemán (1946-1952), Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958), Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964), and Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) abandoned the direction taken by el presidente reformista, favoring the expansion of capitalist agriculture, grounded in private property and the exploitation of remunerative agriculture. Agrarian reform continued on a much smaller scale and with the acknowledged purpose to pacify the most pressing peasant demands. Thus, during those régimes approximately 40,500,000 hectares of land were redistributed among about 714,908 peasants. The expropriation of latifundia stopped with the result that they began to reconstitute themselves (Paz Sánchez, 1968:67). To give the counterreform a legal character, Miguel Alemán modified constitutional article 27 giving small agricultural and cattle ranches larger surface areas (100 hectares of irrigated land or 300 hectares for commercially cultivated land). These properties by far outstripped the 20 hectares granted by law to the ejidos (Stavenhagen, 1975:148). However, few ejidos actually received 20 hectares. In addition, the small landowners received protection by certificates of inalienability, an act which practically declared the agrarian reform finished. Moreover, the demands of the large agricultural enterprises were given priority with the result that their holdings soon developed into huge modern capitalist agrobusinesses equipped with the latest technological

gear, thus contributing to rural unemployment through labor-saving devices. The new concentration of land was also made possible through many legal loopholes, which allowed that fractions of land could be parcelled out to family members to bypass the law that properties are not to surpass 20 hectares.

Today, according to declarations by the Central Campesina Independiente (CCI, Independent Peasant Central), there are 38 latifundia whose owners possess circa 2 million hectares of land (El Día, July 13, 1977). Simultaneously, about 4 million peasants are without land again. This enormous mass swells the ranks of the agrarian proletariat, suffers from continuous pauperization, migrates from latifundio to latifundio during the harvest season, emigrates to the United States in search of work, or clutters around the squatter areas in the cities. In recent years, many of these frustrated individuals have abandoned legal ways of obtaining land and have resorted more and more to forceful land invasions. During Luis Echeverría's régime (1970-1976) alone "more than 500 occupations of land took place" (Huacuja & Woldenberg, 1976:168). These invasions and the accompanying violence signal clearly that the peasants have not only lost patience with the legal system (quite often it took more than 20 years for an individual to receive the title for his land) but also faith in the President. Their attitudes mirror to which extent the image of the state as unbiased mediator of the class conflict has deteriorated.

Turning to the urban working class it remains to be stated that, although the 1917 Constitution proclaimed the right of association, the majority of the working class has not yet been unionized. In 1970 there were 15,678 workers' organizations with 1,974,350 affiliates out of

12,955,057 economically active persons (Anuario Estadístico, 1971:360-361). These figures indicate that only about 24 percent are unionized, whereas the vast majority of the rural and urban proletariat is not represented by any organization and is therefore largely margined from economic and social well-being.

Moreover, with the bureaucratization of the unions, the workers' leaders (not the workers, as Cárdenas would have wanted it) became the associates of the government. Since the leaders were easily coopted into the political bureaucracy, organized workers ended up having no real representation. The mass politics of Cárdenas ceased once the state had been firmly consolidated, and the groundwork for dependent capitalist development had been laid. It ceased because there existed the possibility that mass politics might change into class politics, which in turn would have endangered the developmentalist model chosen by succeeding governments.

Avila Camacho's ideology of "national unity," taken over from Cárdenas, was designed to defuse class struggle, to create a stable and tame labor force and to construct a proper climate for private investors, national as well as foreign. "Conciliation had to be imposed on the confrontation politics of groups and classes in order not to endanger the expansionist dynamics which the country experienced at that moment and at the same time combat fascism through the solidification of political institutions of the corporate kind" (Reyna & Miquet, 1976:52-53).

Not until the régime of Miguel Alemán, when the peso began to decline (from U.S. \$0.55 per peso in 1946 to U.S. \$0.05 in 1977) with serious economic repercussions for the masses, did the organized working class start to mobilize against the politics of price increases and the austerity

program imposed by Alemán. However, the efforts to institutionalize the class conflict now turned against the workers. Alemán used the corporate institutions to intervene directly in union matters, breaking in that manner the relative independence of the existing syndicates. He did not tolerate working class opposition and repeatedly employed the army to crush a strike. In addition, he withdrew government recognition from certain leftist unions (Hansen, 1972:152), and "repression was converted into the principle medium of the state to stop working class insurgency, and, in general, against the independence of labor organizations" (Boils, 1975:79). Furthermore, the phenomenon of charrismo began to play a more vital part in controlling the discontent of the rank and file and the independent union movement. Charrismo expresses itself in the systematic use of violence to support a government-friendly union direction; total abandonment of democratic methods thereby permanently violating the workers' rights; misuse and stealing of union funds; and corruption in all its forms (Alonso, 1972:98).

During Ruiz Cortines' mandate the country experienced a somewhat higher growth rate due to the Korean War. Exports fell, however, when the war ended, resulting in the further devaluation of the peso and in increased strike action. Ruiz Cortines emphasized the "unity of the revolutionary family" to neutralize the polarization which had occurred under Alemán. It was during these years that the workers' movement began the struggle for internal union democracy and against corrupt leaders. In the forefront of these eruptions were the railroad workers, telegraphists, telephonists, postal workers, teachers and others. Ruiz Cortines satisfied some of their demands. Frequently, however, he too mobilized the troops and the police.

This attitude reflects the fact that the movements for working class independence from the CTM and the official party, which in 1946 underwent another change and turned into the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party), are no great threat to the government yet, since only a very small fraction of the working class participates. The PRI, as well as its peasant, workers, and middle class sectors (the army had been excluded from the Party since 1941), suffers from a great lack of democratic procedures. While it is formally autonomous, it has no decision-making or budgetary authority. "It is run oligarchically, exercises little power except for putting people into office, and is ultimately subservient to the President, since the President appoints and removes the Party head at his discretion" (Eckstein, 1977: 24). Its main purpose is the political domination of the population through the bureaucracies of the labor unions and the associations and federations of the peasants and middle class. However, "because of its hierarchical organization and the sclerosis that for some years has paralyzed it more and more, it performs with increasing inefficiency. The party's deafness increases in direct proportion to the increase in popular dissent" (Paz, 1972:27), which translates into the heightened use of the military to maintain internal order and political stability.

When in 1959, during López Mateos' régime, the railroad workers paralyzed the whole railroad system of the country with a strike, the government again employed the armed forces to crush it. The severe repression of strikes by the military indicates "the army's residual political roles" (Ronfeldt, 1976:320) and signals that it has not been completely depoliticized by the post-revolutionary governments. More and

more the army is used in partisan political activities, such as, during Gustavo Díaz Ordaz' mandate, the repression of the medical movement in 1964-1965, the occupation of universities in Morelia, Sonora, Tabasco, Sinaloa and in Mexico City, and the military participation in the events of 1968. With growing discontent caused by high inflation, unemployment and underemployment -- 60 percent at the end of July 1977 (Padilla Aragón, 1977:5) -- land concentration, and the deportation of braceros by the States -- 750,000 were returned in 1976 (Badische Zeitung, December 31, 1977), military repression will probably increase. Even though the historical professionalization of the armed forces and their political subordination to the civil branch of the state may prevent a military coup, with the growing inability of the Party to control the waves of discontent and protests, the army in collusion with the private sector may sooner or later be tempted to free itself from the Party and its personification, the President.

When Luis Echeverría took office in 1970 he was faced with serious economic and political problems, such as the disequilibrium in the balance of payments, the crisis in the agrarian sector, high unemployment, an increasing public deficit, the financial crisis of state enterprises and the deterioration of the image of the state among the masses. He proposed, therefore, the democratization of all aspects of life in the country and in the Party (apertura democrática); affirmed national independence, even though Mexico depended on foreign countries for up to 85 percent of its technology (LAER, Oct. 8, 1976); promised to control foreign penetration;<sup>11</sup> advocated ideological pluralism; affirmed the usefulness of the mixed economy; defended nationalist-oriented businesspeople, etc. In his message

to the nation in December 1970 he promised to work towards the amplification of the internal market and a juster distribution of income. He asserted that agrarian reform would be continued and that foreign investment<sup>12</sup> was not to replace Mexican capital. He assured respect for workers' rights and promoted the incorporation of indigenous groups into national development (El Gobierno Mexicano, December, 1970:9-26). "Mexicanization" meant to Echeverría that 60 percent of capital invested in manufacturing must be Mexican and 60 percent of locally-produced goods must be sold in the domestic market.

Even though his nationalistic reforms did not change labor-capital relations significantly, Echeverría faced serious opposition when in May 1975 the CONCAMIN, CONCANACO, the Association of Bankers, the Mexican Council of Businessmen and the Mexican Association of Insurance Institutions united in the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial (CCE, Business Coordinator's Council) and presented the President with a document demanding the defense of private property, the restriction of the economic activities of the state and attacking the class struggle of some of the unions (Excélsior, May 8, 1975). This program was intended to influence Echeverría's Six-Year Plan and by presenting it to the political bureaucracy en bloque, the CCE hoped that its provisions would be implemented. Nevertheless, the bourgeoisie lacks a social base sufficiently strong to confront the state.



CHAPTER II: STATE, CLASS AND CONTROL

The State recognizes no coinage but power: and it issues the coins itself.

Ursula K. LeGuin, The Dispossessed

The State and Political Power

The Mexican state has, during the period under consideration from 1876 to 1977 -- 101 years of misery for the masses -- changed in many ways, and, yet, it also has retained many of its original features. "By the word 'state' is meant the government machine, or the state insofar as it forms a special organism separated from society through the division of labor ..." (Marx, 1951:31) between classes. The state consists of a set of political institutions, such as the executive, the judiciary, the legislature, the military, and the government administrative bureaucracies. Seen as such it can be studied in its relationship to the rest of society -- the economy, the social classes and socio-political power -- and its changes under specific historical circumstances. The above definition of the state allows to formulate a conclusion which departs from classical political and economic thought insofar as it implies that the division of labor between classes results in continuous conflict between the dominant and subordinated classes. Thus society is no longer seen in Adam Smith's terms as a society of free, self-interested economic men interacting as equals in the market place supposedly guided by "the invisible hand" of supply and demand. In Mexico, the demand is certainly there, but "the invisible hand" has not been able to supply the market

place. Society becomes now the arena of the struggle between classes lorded over by the state.

The state is looked upon as a power outside society rising above the social classes and turning into the supreme arbiter of the class conflict. It becomes a special political organism which because of its "appalling parasitic growth ... enmeshes the body ... of society like a net and chokes all pores ..." (Marx, n.d.:107). The state within capitalist society operates to perpetuate the capitalist system of production, although there is disagreement among some authors concerning interaction between the state and the economically dominant class (Miliband, 1969, 1973; Poulantzas, 1969). Antonio Gramsci analyzes the state as an amalgam of the dictatorship of those in hegemonic control, that is the leadership of one class or a fraction of a class not only in the economic terrain but also in the cultural and political arena. He also attributes to the state an educative and formative role, insofar as it promotes "the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production, hence of evolving even physically new types of humanity" (Gramsci, 1971:242). Poulantzas goes a step further interpreting the functions of the state as politically disorganizing the dominated class (Poulantzas, 1969:238-240). Furthermore, not only is the state actively promoting the political hegemony of the dominant class, it is also increasingly intervening in the economic development of capitalism and its task of capitalist accumulation (O'Connor, 1973:8). This trend has been particularly visible in the industrially late-developing capitalist nations, such as Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain and Portugal, and is also one of the outstanding features of industrially

underdeveloped and dependent capitalist countries, such as Mexico. Furthermore, Gramsci differentiates between the concepts of class-state and regulated society which confuse the inherent contradiction in class societies. "As long as the class-state exists," he writes, "the regulated society cannot exist....The confusion of class-state and regulated society is peculiar to the middle classes and petty intellectuals, who would be glad of any regularisation that would prevent sharp struggles and upheavals. It is a typically reactionary and regressive conception" (1971:257-258).

The characterization of the state outside "civil society" (Marx's "bürgerliche Gesellschaft," or properly translated "bourgeois society") does not necessarily imply that it is an autonomous body standing above the rest of society, even though this is the declared purpose of most existing states. In the Mexican case the state is dependent on the world division of labor. Since this world division favors the economies of European and today particularly North American countries, the Mexican state has become subordinated to the economic whims of those nations. Nevertheless, during specific historical events a state of exception with relative autonomy can develop, due to a phenomenon which Friedrich Engels describes as, "the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both, [the grand bourgeoisie and the masses]" (1951:290). This was certainly the case in Mexico after the Revolution of 1910-17, when the old Porfirian order of privilege for a few had been defeated, and there was no bourgeoisie conquérante to take over hegemony of the nation's destiny.

The epoch of the Porfiriato witnessed an extreme political centraliza-

tion in Mexico City resulting in the incapacity of the Congress and the Supreme Court to act as checks on the executive power. A very strong executive emerged, who was slightly corrected only by the geographic isolation of some communities and by the dependence of the country on Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, Díaz' hombre fuerte (strong man) politics enabled him to set himself up as the ultimate arbiter of all internal conflicts "by creating and maintaining in every state two or more rival political groups who were loyal to him" (Meyer, 1977:7). Díaz' government was authoritarian. He used the liberal Constitution of 1857 to legitimate his power, to impose the sovereignty of the state and to neutralize, conciliate or destroy all opposition (Calderón, 1972:26-28).

The privileged capitalism of the Porfiriato (privileged in the sense that only a very small number of landowners, industrialists, administrators, partook in the social, economic and political life of the country, whereas the masses were considered animals only good to be exploited) and the growing imperialist penetration into the Mexican economy generated new classes and transformed the socio-economic relations of production. Wealth was located in a small group of agricultural and industrial oligarchs who, allied with foreign capital, dominated the political scene as well. A native capitalist class of industrialists, merchants and financiers was weak and dependent on foreign investment for its own growth. The modernization of agricultural enterprises through irrigation works and the use of new machinery as well as the coming of age of the railroad system generated a middle class of small merchants and businessmen, an enormous corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, and a number of liberal professionals, such as lawyers, teachers, managers, etc. This middle class could not

prosper under Díaz, since the great landowners and industrialists, who in most cases were the same men and their families, monopolized business together with the foreign investors. During this period individuals, families and groups formed alliances among themselves and with the state, some of which have survived to this date. The Garza Sada family of the Monterrey Group<sup>13</sup> is the most outstanding example. "Although relatively independent of the federal government, it undoubtedly benefitted from the efforts of the Díaz government to create a national market in the late nineteenth century, as well as the pro-industry policies of Governor Bernardo Reyes and other state officials ..." (Hamilton, 1977:15-16).

The economic growth and accompanying division of labor affected all social classes. The foreign mining companies needed a larger labor force, so they offered slightly higher wages to lure people away from the haciendas. The industrial proletariat thus formed, constituted the youngest social class. Its growth, similarly to the growth of the middle class, depended on the increasing expansion of national industry, which in turn depended on foreign investment. As Calderón states, this new class had no political experience, and since it was numerically small it submitted to an ambitious middle class, which wanted to undermine the privileged position of the great industrialists, agriculturalists and merchants, national as well as foreign (1972:12). And then there was the vast army of the peasantry, inarticulate and isolated, living and working either on the great haciendas in some kind of debt peonage, or in communal villages. Those peasants, who had lost their property because of the enormous land concentrations, formed a huge rural proletariat migrating from hacienda to factory and even to the United States in search for work.

The great social upheaval of 1910-1917 shifted this arrangement around. Urban intellectuals initiated a campaign against the Díaz régime. Their ideology was based on classical liberalism. They promoted the democratic state, federal and representative, the division of government into judiciary, legislative and executive power, individual liberties and universal suffrage for men (women only gained the vote in 1953 under President Ruiz Cortines). The liberals fought the huge properties and enterprises and advanced their ideal of small properties, which could be established through individual effort. However, without the pressures from the peasants and workers the Mexican Revolution most certainly would not have gone further than the exchange of the Porfirian privileged régime for the privileged régime of the middle classes which had emerged during the Porfiriato. In fact, as Adolfo Gilly emphasized during a Conference in Mexico City in June 1977, Zapatista forces were the most radical, not in ideas but in practice. According to him the most important aspect of the Revolution was that the masses decided to fight, first the Porfirian army, and after they had wiped it out, the power of the middle class Constitutionalists, who claimed political hegemony. For Gilly the essence of the Revolution was the gigantic battle of the peasants for land against a capitalist state. The struggle for ancient traditions (land, ejidos) made it possible for the peasants to form a consciousness independent from the dominant class. The ideas were not formulated in anti-capitalist terms, but they were potentially anti-capitalist. The Zapatistas' slogan "La tierra es de quien la trabaja" (Land belongs to those who work it) sums up their cosmology. It implies the socialization of land, forests, and waters. However, the peasants did not have a national

program for industrialization and their anti-capitalism translated into a mode of production which could be categorized as primitive communism, that is, society would remain fundamentally agrarian with a basic division of labor by age and sex, and people would work the land individually or communally and share its products. If one views industrialization as progressive, the peasants' attitude must be classified as regressive in that they wanted to establish an archaic system of production. One might also want to speculate, however, that had the peasants won the military battle they would have had to consider the need for industrialization just as the Constitutionalist had to take into account the peasants' demands for land. Needless to say, we will never know which way history would have taken had the peasants come to power.

During the same Conference, Arnaldo Córdova carried the discussion a step further. In his view, the participation of peasants and workers in the Revolution forced the petty bourgeoisie (Carranza, Obregón and generally the Constitutionalist forces) to produce an ideology for the masses, if it wanted to gain power and remain in it. The petty bourgeoisie did not have an ideology of its own. It was forced by the struggle of the masses to adopt popular measures, in other words, it espoused the ideology of populism. Continuing the debate, Enrique Semo, speaking at the same Conference, stated that even though there were certain sectors (peasants, workers, the Flores Magón movement) which went further than capitalism, in the final instance the petty bourgeoisie imposed its régime on the rest of society with the objective of developing national capitalism without, however, breaking the ties of dependence on imperialist powers. The Mexican Revolution then can be interpreted as a corrective of capi-

talist development.

The inexistence of political institutions after the Revolution created a hegemonic vacuum since no group could present a coherent project for national reconstruction. Consequently, the Constitutionalist army was the only structured institution to forge and consolidate the new state. It should, however, be pointed out that these military forces cannot be compared with the traditional Latin American military men, since the Mexican Constitutionalist army had been formed exclusively for the purpose of defeating the Porfirian régime and its professional army. The Constitutionals, as well as the zapatistas and villistas, had been civilians prior to the Revolution, and once the Díaz army had been destroyed, most revolutionary generals favored a come-back to civilian government.

Carranza was in fact the first post-Revolution President who saw the need for civilian rule. For this reason he suggested Bonillas as his successor. Obregón, as well, felt the country had to be liberated from its liberators, the generals. That is not to suggest that the military men created by the Revolution did not put up a fight to get their hands on state controls. The Revolution had politicized all participants. It was the most difficult task of the hegemonic fraction to neutralize and depoliticize the army as well as the masses.

To construct a new state the Constitutionals needed an ample social base for support against threats from the defeated Porfirian order, imperialist intervention, and rebellious generals. To achieve that objective the Constitutionals adopted two basic measures: 1) They recognized the division of society into classes. However, their goal was to further capitalist development requiring labor tranquility and political stability.



They thus proposed the organization of the peasants and workers by the state and propounded an ideology of class collaboration rather than class struggle. 2) Consequently, they adopted "mass policies" which were to satisfy the immediate needs of the masses, both rural and urban. Agrarian and labor reforms were specifically designed to manipulate the masses into supporting one fraction of the "revolutionary family" against another. For example, Obregón sought the support of the CROM against Carranza, Calles wooed labor and the agrarians against Adolfo de la Huerta, Cárdenas obtained the loyalty of the agrarians and labor against the callistas. Moreover, the emerging elite (Constitutionalists) could maintain itself in power only by proclaiming that it stood above all social classes, creating the myth that the state was the "supreme arbiter" in conflicts between opposing interests.

To legitimize their endeavors the Constitutionalists designed a Magna Carta which gave the state practically unlimited power over private property; subordinated the legislative and judicial power to the power of the executive; and converted the executive into an "impartial regulator" of conflicts between capital and labor. With the establishment of the Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration the Constitutionalists assured their political hegemony. Thus the newly emerging state came to resemble very closely the Porfirian state, an order of things the Constitutionalists purportedly defeated. The major difference lay in the fact that the masses had finally arrived on the political scene, even though their integration into immense corporative structures (CTM, CNC, popular sector) eventually led to their political and ideological subjugation with limited cooptative possibilities and unlimited repressive feasibilities.

Furthermore, the requirements of monopoly capitalism necessitated state intervention in the economy. To develop capitalism an ample infrastructure was required. Private capital, however, was not interested in investing in this sector since the profit return was quite minimal. The state, therefore, ran the railroads and the ports, constructed irrigation systems, and provided private investors with cheap electricity and transport rates. To this end state intervention benefitted the new national bourgeoisie (generals who had been set up in business by the state, and the old economic elite, which had only been politically defeated, such as the Monterrey Group), as well as foreign direct investors, who returned to Mexico.

The new emerging state went through clearly distinguishable phases which can be defined as follows: The first phase (1914-1934) was characterized by the erratic attempts of the military-political apparatus to seek to impose its ideas of national development and reconstruction, as exemplified by the Constitution, on the rest of society. The most important events occurring during this period were the gradual taming of the popular masses and the army and their integration in embryonic corporative structures (CNC, CROM, professionalization of the army) and the foundation of the PNR in 1929 in an attempt to institutionalize social conflicts, to centralize power in the federal government rather than granting state governors political autonomy and to legitimate the hegemony of the new ruling group. This period was distinguished by the extreme efforts of Presidents Carranza, Obregón and Calles to strengthen the power of the executive. The "hombre fuerte" (strong man) politics of these men led to the eventual centralization of power in the hands of the state as

personified by the President of the Republic. (For more details on this period, see Chapter I, Historical Setting.)

The second phase from 1934 to 1940 saw the formation of the new state and its consolidation under Cárdenas. His efforts witnessed a further concentration of political power in the hands of the President. The rearrangement of the PNR into the PRM and the incorporation of the CNC, CTM, the state employees, and the army into the official party laid the foundations for the formidable control and domination of the working masses by the state, even though these may not have been the intentions of Cárdenas (see North & Raby, 1977; Shulgovski, 1967).<sup>14</sup> Moreover the nationalization of petroleum, electricity and the railroads, as well as the foundation of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN, National Polytechnical Institute) made possible the development of new industrial enterprises and provided trained personnel to run them. Even though Mexico was still a predominantly agricultural society (Villa, 1972:459) the world crisis of 1929 with its consequences of import-substitution industrialization as well as Cárdenas' reforms pushed the country towards greater industrial development, which was particularly emphasized during the third phase, the maturity of the state, starting around 1940 and lasting to our own day.

By 1940 the Mexican state had turned more into an interventionist state. Because of the great depression in the 1930s it began to control almost totally the production and distribution of energy; it participated in communication and transports, in the steel and iron industry, in the production of fertilizers, railroad equipment, paper, in aviation, the film industry, the refinement of sugar, in the extraction of raw materials,

in the production of textiles, electrical goods and in the automobile industry. In 1960 the public sector received 36 percent of the income generated by the one hundred major enterprises of the country, whereas the national private sector obtained only 14 percent and the rest (50 percent) went to foreign businesses (Labastida, 1972:116). This process was combined with the policies to industrialize the country which translated into a series of incentives for private investment, both national and foreign, benefitting big business rather than all social classes.

With regard to the law, no notable changes had occurred. The 1917 Constitution remained basically unchanged, even though there were a few modifications, such as the right to protection (juicio de amparo) for the landowners and the titles of inalienability which practically ended agrarian reforms. One major change took place in 1946 when Avila Camacho modified the PRM and named it PRI. The army was eliminated from the Party but the peasants (CNC), the workers (CTM), and the "popular" classes (CNOP) remained subordinated to the new institution. The PRI, however, never had real power. Decisions were (and still are) made by the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN, National Executive Committee) of the PRI, which consists of seven members. Since the President of the Republic selects the head of the CEN, there is no danger that it would in any way oppose the supreme power. The President thus always retains the last word concerning political matters.

In the economic sphere the Ministry of the Presidency, the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Mexico and Nacional Financiera control decision-making, since the Ministry of Finance is associated with the Bank of Mexico and Nacional Financiera through interlocking directorates.

Industrialization and the lack of significant agrarian and labor reforms caused the deterioration of the social pact (peasant-workers-state) created by the Revolution. Important working class and peasant movements demanding the implementation of the more democratic aspects of the Constitution were repressed under the pretext to assure social peace which industrialization required. Repeated violent repression seriously undermined the legitimacy of the state causing recent governments to concentrate on measures such as political reform, etc., to neutralize discontent.

The strong state as expressed in the incredible political and economic powers of the President seems to be a condition imposed by the late and dependent development of capitalism. Mexico's case is neither unique nor is it an exception here. Other late developing countries have exhibited similar symptoms, such as national socialism in Germany, fascism in Italy, totalitarianism in Japan, corporatism in Portugal, and falangism in Spain, although the late-dependent capitalism of the Mexican variety most certainly has its own idiosyncracies. "The result is, nevertheless, similar: a new method of state intervention in the economy, recognition and integration into the system of so-called 'interest groups', such as unions; increasing deterioration of classical liberalism and of parliamentary forms of territorial representation and, in short, a diverse corporatization of the state and society" (Leal, 1975c:57). The Mexican Revolution did not destroy private property, it never intended to. It eliminated privileged private property and substituted for it free private property as a necessary condition to pursue a capitalist development more dynamic than the one of the Porfiriato, but tied to the same world capitalist system (Calderón, 1972:252). To enforce obedience to and compliance

with this new model the Mexican state had to resort to political control in the form of ideological domination and/or physical coercion of the popular masses for its own survival. Thus, the development of independent political parties or labor organizations, which could threaten this hegemony, were never tolerated. The state developed an ideology for the masses while at the same time promoting the interests of the capitalist class. "In this context, when the civil society is 'gelatinous' and strongly permeated by the ideology of the directing class, the social reproduction of the dominant class and of the bourgeois state is assured" (Saldívar, 1976:18). The populist ideology of the state has contributed a great deal to the passive submission of a considerable number of the masses to the patronage of the President. It has also watered down class consciousness and neutralized the political awareness gained during the revolutionary struggle. Most certainly, Mexicans will have to break the strangle-hold of populist fetters and rupture the myth of continuity with the Mexican Revolution and the Constitution of 1917, if they ever are to develop their nation independently and for the benefit of all social classes.

#### The Transformation of the Social Classes

To trace the transformation of the social classes it will be necessary to consider the Porfirian system one more time. During the Porfiriato Mexico was a predominantly agrarian society with 80 percent of its economically active population rural and an estimated 97 percent of the rural population landless (Hamilton, 1975:86). Most of the post-Revolution

Presidents spent a lot of time attempting to neutralize politically this great peasant mass which potentially could have been the cause for their overthrow. Obregón and Calles wanted to turn the peasants into farmers, North American style. Cárdenas consolidated them as minifundists with touches of collectivism, but trapped in a capitalist market. López Mateos generated the idea of a semi-proletarian peasantry and ensured its political submission by granting it fragments of unproductive arid and mountainous terrain. Thus emerged a quite heterogeneous peasant mass of ejidatarios, minifundists, day workers, etc., geographically isolated and easily manipulated by the local caciques. This peasantry, moreover, is "not a reminiscence of an obscure past, but the subproduct of the growth of modern capitalism" (Bartra, 1976:330), in that the land grabbing of the nineteenth century and the renewed land concentration of the twentieth century had turned them into "free" landless agricultural laborers now creating a surplus for modern agro-businesses.

As industry and the huge agro-businesses spread, the dissolution of the peasantry becomes unavoidable. The tasks of the politicians center now around how to include the newly created mass of rural proletarians into the already overloaded job market in the cities without causing major chaos and uprooting. However, with the introduction of large capital-intensive agricultural enterprises, particularly in the northern states of Sonora and Sinaloa, the available lands for peasants shrank tremendously, which caused President José López Portillo to proclaim that there are no lands to distribute anymore, an assertion to which a peasant replied: "Then why not divide latifundios, patrón" (Proceso, March 19, 1977). Nevertheless, there is no reason for the intransigent attitude of neglecting

the peasantry since it can perform quite well side by side with the industrial process. After all, food production is still the number one concern of humankind. In one of the leading industrialized nations, Germany, small farms (Bauernhöfe), which produce both for the internal market and the European Economic Community, coexist with the most advanced manufacturing industries. This is not to imply that Mexico ought to follow the German way of development. It is only meant to illustrate that the peasantry does not have to be destroyed for industrialization to occur.

With the accelerated growth of industry after World War II, the industrial proletariat increased as well. With it the city has attained more importance than the countryside, and the preoccupation of the governments has shifted to bringing about a labor pact with the organized workers in order to reestablish their social base of support which they needed to maintain themselves in power. However, only 24 percent of the work force is unionized. This fact translates into about three million workers belonging to unions dominated by the official party, and only 250,000 who are associated with relatively independent unions (El Día, March 11, 1976). These workers are found in the public sector and in large corporations receiving relatively high wages.

The non-unionized work force (about 76 percent) constituted a large under- or unemployed Lumpenproletariat representing that social dynamite observed in peasant land invasions and open rebellions.

The growth of state enterprises and bureaucracies, as well as large monopolistic corporations, changed also the structure of the middle class. Many formerly independent artisans, small shopkeepers, small and medium businessmen have been absorbed by those institutions. Their numbers have



diminished from 24.42 percent of the economically active population in 1950 to 18.91 percent in 1970 (Rangel, 1972:89). The middle class is, just as the peasantry and working class, quite heterogeneous. It grew tremendously with the creation of the corporate institutions in the 1930s and became integrated in the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP, National Confederation of Popular Organizations) in 1943. The CNOP is a curious amalgam of unions of bureaucrats; military members, who can affiliate individually with special permission; small agricultural proprietors; urban artisans; small and medium-sized merchants and industrialists; professionals and technicians; non-salaried workers, among them lottery ticket sellers; the National Federation of Mariachis, and the Association of Mexican Singers, etc. (Ayala Anguiano & Martí, 1975:68-69). Today, the CNOP is the third foot (the CNC and the CTM are the other two feet) of the body on which the PRI and the institution of the Presidency rests. As the following statistics illustrate the state body is greatly deformed and even major surgery will not change the creature to perform in better health. Moreover, with only three feet to stand on, it is obviously limping.

The representation of the CNOP in Congress is disproportionately great insofar as 89 [50%] deputies out of 178 of the PRI came from the CNOP, whereas the CNC was represented by 51 [29%] and the CTM only by 38 [21%] (Delhumeau, 1970:80). The simple conclusion to be drawn here is that the government apparently fears the generally higher educated middle class more than the proletariat and peasants. However, as with labor senators and deputies, the middle class pulls about as much weight in real political decision-making as their lower class counterparts. The President and his

advisers make the decisions. The labor and middle class senators and deputies as members of the PRI just carry out orders. "The party has produced not a single idea, not a single program in its forty years of existence! It is not a political organization in the proper sense of the term; its recruiting methods are not democratic, and it develops neither programs nor strategies for realizing them. It is a bureaucratic organism that performs political-administrative functions....It is dominated by a group of hierarchs who, for their part, give blind obedience to each president in turn" (Paz, 1972:26-28).

Nevertheless, the middle class is the régime's strongest supporter, since it is economically better provided for and enjoys fringe benefits for which the working class is still fighting. A case in point is the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (FSTSE, Federation of Unions of Civil Service Workers) founded on December 5, 1938 by Cárdenas as a concession to the middle class. The Federation remained subjected to the state in a political game of negotiations for more privileges than either the workers or peasants ever received. Originally, it consisted of 29 unions and has grown to include 46 in 1973 with 700,000 members (in contrast the CTM controls 3 million members). From its executive committee the state regularly recruits members for the political elite. Thus 49 political leaders have emerged from the FSTSE since 1938, out of which 29 received high posts in Congress, 3 became president of the Congreso del Trabajo,<sup>15</sup> and 17 entered other political positions. Even though the FSTSE constituted only 4.91 percent of the economically active population in 1970 it has become particularly useful in pro-government mobilizations turning into the most permanent support of the status quo.

Among the new elite were many of the old wealthy families and groups of the Porfiriato. However, the old oligarchy and the incipient industrial, commercial, and financial bourgeoisie were, after the Revolution, splintered into too many groups to be able to take over state control. Thus the Constitutionalist army leaders set themselves up in the political machinery as well as in the business sector. "As a class, it was emerging from within the bureaucratic-military leadership itself by means of public contracts, kickbacks and speculation, and also through the incorporation of existing private businessmen who were patronized and protected by the entrepreneurial state" (North & Raby, 1977:33).

It can, therefore, be stated that the national industrial bourgeoisie were creatures of the state, which with its policies of political and monetary stability, a liberal fiscal system, high levels of production, and containment of salary demands promoted business and strengthened it. These policies were designed to stimulate private investors to participate in the project of development and capital accumulation (Labastida, 1972: 127). The national industrial bourgeoisie started out autonomously during the import substitution program caused by the depression of the 1930s. However, it is becoming increasingly more dependent on the external sector -- the multi-national corporations -- in which national participation remains under the technological, financial and administrative control of the foreign group (Cinta, 1972:195-196). The national private sector consisted of a multitude of small and medium firms operating under the auspices of an archaic organization and with outdated technology. It pays low wages (e.g. the textile industry) and depends on protection by the state since it produces at higher costs than the large corporations. The program of

"Mexicanization," which demands that 51 percent of the capital invested in foreign corporations must be Mexican, in fact favors the affiliation of national business with the multi-national corporations (Labastida, 1972:132).

The new bourgeoisie today can be divided into the following different economic groups, each having a distinct ideological orientation: 1) The Monterrey Group and its affiliated businesses (see Hamilton, 1977, for details) is one of the most important monopolistic groups. It controls television stations, schools, radio and the press in Monterrey, Nuevo León. It has encouraged "white unionism" (company unions) and maintains close ties with conservative sectors in the Federal District and Puebla, and influences and directs capitalist groups in Jalisco, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas and Sinaloa. It is also allied with imperialist powers and is known to have contributed to the overthrow of the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) in Chile in 1973. This group's reason for being centers around the sabotage of state enterprises; monopolization of grain to force scarcity and with it a rise in prices; kidnappings; bombings; aggressions directed at the left, etc. (Solidaridad, No. 127/128, n.d.:11). The Monterrey Group intends to limit state intervention in the economy and demands greater repression of popular and proletarian movements for independence and democracy.

2) Another sector of the bourgeoisie is more nationalistic in outlook. It consists of the bankers' group, which controls almost all deposits in the country. This group is made up of the Banco Nacional de México (National Bank of Mexico), the Banco de Comercio (Commercial Bank), the Banco Internacional (International Bank), Banco de Londres y México (Bank

of London and Mexico), Banco Mexicano (Mexican Bank), and Banco Comercial Mexicano (Mexican Commercial Bank). This group seeks to adapt to the objectives of the government. It capitalizes from the régime's policies and pursues greater influence in national decision-making by less conflictive methods.

3) To offset the pressures from the Monterrey Group and like-minded businessmen the government maintains a permanent alliance with small and medium businessmen who are grouped together in the Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Transformación (CANACINTRA, National Chamber of the Manufacturing Industry) to sustain their conception as "nationalist enterprisers." In fact, the slogan nacionalismo empresarial (entrepreneurial nationalism) became the ideological banner of the CANACINTRA.

Nevertheless, despite their ideological differences these business groups have become economically stronger and have gained increased political weight. Their main concern has been to guard the "free enterprise" system and for that purpose they grouped together in various organizations, some of which are the CONCANACO, the CONCAMIN, the Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana (COPARMEX, Employers' Confederation of the Mexican Republic), the CANACINTRA, the Association of Bankers, the Mexican Association of Insurance Institutions, and the Social Union of Mexican Businessmen. These groups function by law as consulting organisms to the state. As such they are in a position to influence governmental decisions. However, they do not constitute a hegemonic bloque. Their political power is limited by their dependence on foreign corporations or on the state, and by their size as well as their position in production (Labastida, 1972: 133).

To offset their political "powerlessness" these groups have founded the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial (CCE, Entrepreneurial Coordinating Council) on May 5, 1975. The CCE is an attempt by these sectors to unite in order to influence more effectively government policies. This organization emerged without the promotion or tutelage of the government (Huacuja & Woldenberg, 1976:225).

So far, interbourgeois conflicts, which had arisen from the diverse ideological orientations, were generally played out within the confines of the official party. The governments established informal mechanisms of consultation with the bourgeoisie to discuss designs affecting the political economy of the country. An example of this type of consultation occurred in Los Pinos in 1973 when the then President Luis Echeverría met with representatives of the Monterrey Group to talk about state intervention in Nuevo León (Huacuja & Woldenberg, 1976:221). The new President, José López Portillo, as well, met with the Garza Sada family of the Monterrey Group early in 1977. However, the official reason for this visit is not known. One might speculate, though, that the two parties established informal policies to guide their relations with each other.

The business sector constitutes 0.5 percent of the population or about 200,000 Mexicans. Nevertheless, it influences legislation and modifies the decisions of the President. It has the power to censure economic reports of the government and with the help of the major newspapers it introduces alterations in the régime's economic and fiscal policies (González Casanova, 1970:52). Presidential omnipotence has its limitations here. It is also checked by the repeated outbreak of lower class discontent, which the governments find increasingly difficult to

control without the use of violent repression.

### Social and Political Control

The Mexican state's economic growth and profit fetishism -- and for that matter the fetishism of all capitalist societies -- demands the political control of the subordinated classes. Hence emerge ideological catchwords, such as "national unity," "equilibrium between capital and labor," "revolutionary family," "popular alliance" and the like; slogans which imply equality, fraternity and a common sense of purpose. Ideological control, however, is not sufficient enough in a society where the extremes between rich and poor are as pronounced as in Mexico.

To keep internal conflict under control Mexican governments have formulated a goal structure, which has been identified by Bo Anderson and James D. Cockcroft as follows:

- 1) Political stability: political institutions and policy making have to be considered legitimate by all social classes. Political stability is highly regarded since it fosters investments and attracts foreign capital.
- 2) Economic growth: it is essential for capital accumulation, as well as the formulation of public welfare measures.
- 3) Welfare policies: to meet the immediate needs of the unemployed, as well as neutralize discontent.
- 4) "Mexicanization": to contribute to political stability, since it satisfies nationalist sentiments and usually rallies support for the government (1972:221-224).

Obviously, no government has yet given equal attention to all four

goals in this structure. Cárdenas, for example, valued reform policies for the masses and Mexicanization over economic growth to achieve political stability. Since the 1940s, however, most Mexican Presidents have pushed the economic growth program, that is industrialization, to the detriment of the living standards of the working class, the unemployed and the under-employed. This program has resulted in many explosive situations as expressed in peasant land invasions, protest manifestations and strikes by the working as well as the middle class, and found its highest expression in the popular and student movement of the summer of 1968. The failure of the governments to continue reformist policies and their neglect of the masses had reached crisis proportions in the late 1960s and ended with the massacre of 500 men, women and children, 2,000 wounded and some 1,500 arrested (Cockcroft, 1972a:128). Nevertheless, the government prefers more subtle methods of control first, in order not to undermine its legitimacy, before it resorts to the ultimate weapon: police and/or military repression.

The easiest method of social control is the gratification of economic needs. All post-Revolution régimes have implemented agrarian and labor reforms depending on the seriousness of pressures from the peasants and the workers. However, these reforms have never gone beyond satisfying immediate needs and were designed specifically to manipulate beneficiaries into obeying the government.

A second method of social control has been the cooptation of leaders to decapitate potential movements which could threaten the established order. The most common form of cooptation is the integration of union leaders into the governing circles (most famous examples were Luis N. Morones and Celestino Gasca). Union leaders are no longer concerned with



the affairs of the union; rather they prepare for their political careers.

Cooptation also expresses itself in the systematic attempt of the top leadership of the ruling party to include dissident groups into at least partial support of the official party. The party makes limited concessions to such groups in return for limited support (Anderson & Cockcroft, 1972: 232). The most famous examples here have been the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS, Popular Socialist Party), the Central Campesina Independiente (CCI, Independent Peasant Central), and most recently, the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM, Mexican Communist Party).

Corruption has also frequently been used to contribute to social peace. The historical roots of corruption, of course, reach far back into Mexico's past. Porfirio Díaz used it to keep discontent in check, and all post-Revolution régimes applied it for the same purpose. Thus, rebelling generals received tax funds to set themselves up in business in return for their loyalty to the régime. However, if cooptation or corruption failed "strongarm methods were used. Many of the local caudillos or caciques were assassinated, on order from the regime" (Anderson & Cockcroft, 1972:233).

With regard to official union leadership, corruption may present an economic face or a political one. Leaders receive the protection of the government to dispose freely of union funds. It is the rule in Mexican union life that each leader, who occupies the secretary general position of his union, leaves it enriched. Political corruption is expressed in the fact that union leaders receive positions as deputies or senators in the Chambers (Basurto, 1972:55). They are, therefore, not only coopted, but their compliance with the objectives of the governments corrupt their real purpose: to serve the rank and file of their unions.

The most pervasive social control, however, is exercised through the union bureaucracy. Cárdenas' social experiment to make the CTM, CNC, and the popular sector part of the official party bound those organizations forever to the state. All workers are forced by law to join the union in their factory, if they wish to obtain and conserve a job. These unions are generally part of the CTM. Workers who object to this law face the cláusula de exclusión (exclusion clause) which gives the union and the employer the power to fire anybody not in agreement with this policy. Joining the union also means that the workers automatically become members of the official party. The workers are therefore effectively despoiled of their right to select a party of their choice. If they rebel, the cláusula de exclusión is applied to them (Basurto, 1972:53).

This union bureaucracy constitutes a specific structure inside the political bureaucracy; a relatively autonomous sphere within the state organization; a type of network that covers the entire sector of unionized workers. The union bureaucrats, commonly known by the nickname "líderes charros" (labor officials who sell out to management), band together in highly homogeneous cliques, revolving around personal loyalties and expectations; but clearly conscious of their common interests, of their position within the structure of command in Mexico; of their usefulness in the accumulation of capital. The union bureaucrat is, thus, deprived of what might be called a "micro-ideology," that is manifested in the fact that a very minor official of a small union understands that all his mobility -- political and economic -- is tied to that of an intermediate official, and so on, until reaching the level of an authentic hierarch, such as Fidel Velázquez. Consequently, this entire organization of control, which includes gangsterism, manipulation of elections -- union and territorial -- expulsion of workers who are trouble makers, participation in the Courts of Conciliation and Arbitration, its presence on the National Commission on Minimum Wages, and on the Tripartite, etc., shows itself to be highly personified (Leal, 1975:56).

Fidel Velázquez, in fact, has been the undisputed leader of the CTM

since 1947. In this capacity he controls the CTM's members (about 3 million), as well as the Congreso del Trabajo. He selects all workers' delegates to state committees of the PRI and their local deputies and the workers' representatives to the National Executive Committee of the PRI. He also names candidates from the labor sector for national elections (Ayala Anguiano & Martí, 1975:67). The reelection of Velázquez, as well as other official union leaders, has been accepted as quite "normal." Velázquez' rationale for reelection is that it is the only way to defend workers' interests vis-à-vis the employers. Long term experience in union affairs is needed to do this effectively, he says (Basurto, 1972:53). Thus, the lack of union democracy, the dependence on public power, cooptation and corruption of leaders contribute to the durability of the status quo.

Moreover, many of the less strategic unions contain a large number of workers of recent peasant extraction. These workers are less inclined to question the union structure, since their living situation in the cities has improved considerably when compared with their former existence in the country.

Furthermore, in a country where unemployment and underemployment fluctuates between 50 and 60 percent, the workers belonging to the CTM benefit at least from a minimum salary, social security, and some job security. These factors contribute heavily to the stability of the system.

Only state-controlled unions can survive, since the Executive has the power, through the Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration, to declare strikes, called by independent unions, inexistent. By implication independent unions do not legally exist, even though they may operate

within the legal framework of the Constitution.

A similar structure of control operates in the countryside where the CNC, the Ligas de Comunidades Agrarias (Leagues of Agrarian Communities), and the Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización (Department of Agrarian and Colonization Matters), among others, mediate the peasants' interests.

The structure of mediation had its origin in the consolidation of the official party (accomplished by Calles) and in the institutionalization of popular and peasant participation in the state (achieved by Cárdenas). Of course, the popular masses lost very promptly their participation in the state, such "participation" degenerated into a bureaucratic system which in some measure obtains the support (spontaneous or forced) of the poor classes, and which manipulates the situation to save the interests of the classes in power. The high degree of institutionalization (legal or traditional) acquired by these mediating structures goes a long way towards explaining the famous stability of the Mexican political system (Bartra, 1975:142).

If institutionalized methods of control, cooptation, corruption and legalism fail, slander campaigns appear in the media, usually accusing leaders of abusing funds entrusted to them and/or of being in league with foreign agitators, thus undermining their credibility. The result is another quite effective method of control: character assassination.

In recent years the "cooptation-of-leaders" pattern has more or less failed. As a result, the governments resort increasingly to repression. However, even repression takes on different forms. To discredit the left the governments and wealthy industrialists have used paramilitary forces to create disturbances. One of these groups is known as the Halcones (Falcons). The Halcones recruit their members from the Lumpenproletariat in and around the Federal District. They utilize fighting tactics like karate and carry and use fire arms; they usually interfere in leftist

demonstrations and provoke physical attacks so that the police have justification to charge in and arrest the "troublemakers" while the Halcones disappear. The Halcones are employed by a sector of the political bureaucracy to create disorder particularly in student demonstrations. They were organized for this purpose in 1968. They are still used as agents provocateurs and receive a salary fluctuating between 60 and 120 pesos per day (Huacuja & Woldenberg, 1976:100-101). Moreover, the Halcones operate under many assumed names and have been used against all progressive movements. According to the Guardian they were under order from the office of the mayor of Mexico City, Martínez Domínguez, who later lost his position under Echeverría (July 7, 1971).

The Porras are another paramilitary group operating mainly within the UNAM to create disturbances and to prevent the attempts of students to unite and fight for the democratization of the University and the country as a whole. The students at the National University constantly denounce the attacks of the Porras. The principal group of Porras in the UNAM is known by the name of "Grupo Francisco Villa." Its main purpose is to traffic in drugs and cause disorder in student committees with the full approval of the authorities. Their seat is in the Faculty of Law. However, the tactics of these paramilitary groups have become known to the Mexican left, and in demonstrations during the summer of 1977 the progressive movements have ignored the insults and the attempts at physical abuse by marching in rows of five, arm-in-arm, and cordoned off on both sides.

Nevertheless, the government's main goal is political stability and economic growth. For that reason it prefers to maintain a large number of groups in some corporate structure, since this is the easiest way to

control discontent. The more control there is the greater is political stability (Reyna, 1973:11). However, as valid as this principle is, generally speaking, one might want to point out that it is exactly this type of control that organized Mexicans are trying to escape and unorganized Mexicans, particularly the middle class, try to avoid. This is the subject matter of the next chapter.

In conclusion, it remains to be stated that Mexico's nuevo orden did not drastically differ from the ancien régime of the Porfiriato. The Mexican Revolution had begun with the proclamation of essentially conservative values, the return to the principles of the constitutional government of the classic Mexican liberalism of the nineteenth century. One of their exhortations, "sufragio efectivo, no reelección" (effective suffrage, no reelection), has remained the official and obligatory greeting in government correspondence until today (see the documents in Los Presidentes de México ante la Nación, 1966). It was also the slogan that brought Porfirio Díaz into power.

The new state that emerged still retained many of the features of the Porfiriato. It is characterized by extreme political centralization in Mexico City. Federalism is still as weak as it had been in the past; the judicial and legislative powers are still subjected to the executive power; the political career of state governors is still controlled by the center, and important decisions are still made in consultation with the President. In other words, the new Mexican state has not lost its paternalistic and authoritarian character. The idea of the conciliation of classes struck Díaz as useful and he, too, preferred the workers' dependence on the government and the use of selective cooptation of their leaders. Structural

unemployment still forces Mexicans across the Río Grande into the United States, just the same as their grandparents were forced to do during the Porfiriato.

The most important difference between the old and new order was that through the pressures from below the masses were, at least formally, included into the political arena. With the formation of the official party the class conflict was institutionalized and the state became "the official form of the antagonism in bourgeois society" (Marx, n.d.:190). The institution of the presidency and not necessarily the President turned into the dominant factor in society. Thus, the charisma of the President had been transferred to the office; yet, these changes did not eradicate the paternalism of the President or other bureaucratic functionaries.

After the organizational efforts and the creation of the PRM by Cárdenas the internal struggles of the elite for power did not threaten the institutional structures any longer. Divisions could not last long since the depersonalization of the political process made them unprofitable. Institutionalization and the rotation of leadership every sixth year made it possible for new personnel to play out political ambitions, and by the same token cooptation into the Party, and consequently into the political process, became a major mechanism for appeasing opposition.

Nevertheless, as Jorge Basurto so poignantly writes, the Porfirian landowning aristocracy has been substituted by an industrial banking and commercial elite proportionately smaller than its predecessor but more aggressive than the old one; the scientific oligarchy has been substituted by one which delights in being called "revolutionary," however, it is more corrupt than its Porfirian predecessor; the rurales have been succeeded

by hundreds of police corps more bloodthirsty and merciless than their predecessors (1975:50).



CHAPTER III: THE STATE AND POPULAR PROTESTS

I talked with them, to each man alone and to all of them together, telling them to unite so we could get what was ours. The gringos didn't even come outside. They just sicked the cacique on me. I was locked up in jail and they beat the hell out of me trying to make me order the boys back to work. But I knew that trick. Once I called the strike off, they'd have shot me.

Carlos Fuentes, The Good Conscience

The Railroad Workers, 1958-1959

During 1958 and 1959 the most important post-Revolution protest movements began to erupt in Mexico. The socio-economic crises, which had preceded the mobilizations, caused workers in some of the economically strategic sectors, such as the railroadmen, electricians, miners, oil workers, telephonists and telegraphists, as well as students and teachers, to take onto the streets and protest their decreasing living standards. The developmentalist strategies of the governments during the decade of 1940-1950 had been forged by a sharp inflationary process in which wealth concentrated in the high strata of society while at the same time the middle and lower classes experienced a decline in the purchasing power of the peso. In fact, during the period of 1939-1949 the acquisitive power of the agricultural minimum wage shrank 46 percent, in the cities it diminished 39 percent, in 35 industries it fell 27 percent, and for federal public employees it dwindled 35 percent. The profits of the great industrialists, bankers, and merchants, in turn, rose surprisingly from 26.2 percent of the GNP in 1939 to 41.5 percent in 1949 (Loyo Brombila,

1975:552). In addition, most unions had been highly politicized by the Cárdenas' administration and did not take the loss of their autonomy and independence passively. Particularly, the railroad workers, who had experienced workers' administration in the National Railroads, had been left with a deep impression of that experience.

In 1958 the railroad workers asked for an increase in wages of 350 pesos per month to bring their earnings in line with their expenses. The railroad men struck a commission whose task was to study the economic condition of the railway companies to find out whether such a wage hike was feasible. However, the secretary general of the Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros de la República Mexicana (STFRM, Union of Railroad Workers of the Mexican Republic), Samuel Ortega, did not turn over the necessary information for the study to be conducted. He met the workers' delegates accompanied by Porras to intimidate the men. Ortega admonished the workers to be patriotic, to renounce force, and to take into account that a rise in salaries presented a problem to the firm, which after all belonged to all Mexicans. While this happened the secretaries of the locals agreed to a 200 peso rise per month.

Meanwhile, a delegate from Oaxaca, Demetrio Vallejo, pointed out that this was not the opinion of all, and in a plan, which emerged in Veracruz, the majority of the railroad men proposed to reject the 200 pesos agreed to by the local secretaries of the STFRM; to approve the increase of 350 pesos as agreed upon by the Gran Comisión Pro-Aumento de Salarios; to depose in each section the local executive committee and the local committee of vigilance and fiscalization for having negotiated behind the backs of the workers; to replace the national executive committee of the

union with new leaders not associated with the government; and to start escalating strikes up to a total work stoppage if no agreement could be arrived at (Vallejo, 1957:9). Management, of course, refused to deal with the plan and communicated only with the charro leadership, that is Ortega, as the authorized representative of the union. The railroad workers, then, planned their counterattack. They received the support of the Telegraphers' Union, which enabled them to contact members on a nationwide basis. Their ability to travel freely on the rail system, moreover, gave them a great advantage over other unions, since they were able to meet frequently and discuss new developments (Stevens, 1974:109). Thus on June 26, 1958 the work stoppages began. Immediately, Vallejo, who had become the unofficial leader of the STFRM, was accused of being in league with the communist Valentín Campa, who was seen as the "real" instigator of the new conflict in the railroads.

The Chambers of Commerce and Industry broke out into hysterics because of the enormous losses caused by the strikes. President Ruiz Cortines intervened and offered a 215 peso wage increase. The railroad men accepted the offer and returned to work (Alonso, 1972:117-118).

Up to this point the railway workers had triumphed. They did not receive the original wage increase asked for. However, their victory lay in the fact that they achieved their goal without the negotiations between the official leadership and management. In fact, their refusal to acknowledge charro leaders put into question the whole institutionalized framework of manipulation and control resulting in the diminution of power and prestige of the CTM leadership.

Meanwhile, in new union elections Demetrio Vallejo had been elected

secretary general by an overwhelming majority. He saw the need for the purification of workers' leaders and the establishment of union democracy. To overcome the financial situation of the railroads he suggested a rise in export tariffs and the transport prices for minerals. The exploitation of minerals was in the hands of North American firms; a raise in prices, therefore, would have had radical implications, since it would have implied a change in the relations of economic dependence of Mexico on the United States.

However, with the change of the President -- from Ruiz Cortines to Adolfo López Mateos in December 1958 -- the new political winds changed as well. Private enterprisers, the Centro Patronal of the Federal District, the Confederation of Industrial Chambers, members of the Senate, Fidel Velázquez of the CTM, and even the Bloque de Unidad Obrero, (BUO, Block of Workers' Unity), a government-sponsored confederation of unions, saw in Vallejo's suggestions the onslaught of the communists out to "create chaos and anarchy" (Excélsior, Sept. 1, 1958). A smear campaign began in the newspapers accusing Vallejo of misusing union funds and labelling him a communist, which did much to discredit the movement, since the Cold War measures in the United States had repercussions in Mexico. Being called a communist equalled being "Un-Mexican."

Since by February 1959 the railroad company had not paid the wage increase of 215 pesos as recommended by Ruiz Cortines, Vallejo called another strike. It began on March 25, 1959 during Holy Week when many people wanted to leave Mexico City for vacations to the coast. This was exactly the justification the government needed to repress the strike. It was immediately declared illegal by the Board of Conciliation and Arbitra-

tion, and the government of López Mateos sent in the troops. "Army troops mounted guard over all rail installations in the country, and army telegraphers took over the wire communications, replacing union telegraphers who were sympathetic to the railroad men's cause" (Stevens, 1974:122-123). Vallejo was arrested and all vallejista union officials were replaced with pro-government leaders. The attorney general declared Vallejo and his followers as part of an international plot and sentenced them to 16 years in prison.



Antonio Alonso

Demetrio Vallejo, arrested in 1959

The Doctors, 1964-1965

Even though the railroad workers' attempt at democratizing their union and liberating it from charro influences had failed, the spirit of it stayed alive. It did not remain solely with the working class but spread to the middle classes and intellectuals as well.

The medical conflict covered one year of struggle, from November 1964 to October 1965. It started when interns and residents of the Veinte de Noviembre Hospital learned that they were not to receive the customary Christmas bonus. This incensed the interns and residents to such a degree that they threatened the hospital authorities with a strike, which led the chief of Medical Services of the Instituto de Seguridad Social al Servicio de los Trabajadores del Estado (ISSTE, Social Security Institute at the Service of the State's Workers) to dismiss all 206 residents and interns of the Hospital. But the residents and interns had already founded an organization, the Asociación Mexicana de Médicos Residentes e Internos (AMMRI, Mexican Association of Resident Doctors and Interns), and had registered it before a public notary. In addition, AMMRI members went to other government hospitals to persuade interns and resident doctors there to join. By November 29, 1964 a partial strike took place in seven hospitals. For guidelines to resolve the conflict, AMMRI designed a five-point petition, which remained fundamentally the same throughout the conflict, even though official versions and editorials maintained the opposite. The five points were:

- 1) rehiring of the fired doctors without reprisals;
- 2) conversion of the scholarship into a salary; an annual renewable work contract with provisions for seniority;

- 3) preferential hiring of former resident physicians for permanent employment on a full-time basis;
- 4) active participation of residents and interns in the planning of teaching programs;
- 5) satisfactory resolution of the problems in each hospital (Excélsior, Nov. 28, 1964).

By early December, the protest had taken on a national aspect. Doctors, nurses, residents and interns from hospitals in the different states pledged their support to the movement in Mexico City (El Universal, Dec. 4, 1964). The solidarity with the AMMRI covered not only rank and file doctors, but also specialists in all branches. Moreover, the authorities of the medical schools at the UNAM and IPN expressed sympathy and assisted the strikers. The solidarity went to the extreme, when even the patients affected encouraged the young doctors in their demands (Pozas Horcasitas, 1977:62). This show of support gave the movement the legitimacy it needed. Furthermore, the interns and residents refused to talk to intermediaries to seek redress of their problems, and addressed the new President, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, personally. This is a clear departure from traditional Mexican customs. To end the protest Díaz Ordaz suggested that all residents and interns were to be given the Christmas bonus, but he ignored the other points of the petition, perhaps believing that granting the bonus might coopt the AMMRI into submission, as similar gestures had done so often in the past.

Meanwhile, many tenured doctors, who had sympathized with the AMMRI, formed their own organization, the Alianza de Médicos Mexicanos, on January 18, 1965 advocating more moderate kinds of action than those of the AMMRI. AMMRI continued to exist separately but participated in the formulation

of Alianza policies. The Alianza's concerns were remarkably political centering around the bureaucratization of medical services, the demand for a quantity of service of ever-decreasing quality, the dehumanization of both doctor and patient, and the fear of increasing unemployment among the nation's 50 percent of doctors not on the government's payroll (Stevens, 1974:143).

Confronted with almost all of the nation's doctors, Díaz Ordaz conceded and issued two decrees: one to grant a scholarship to the interns and the other one to give a series of benefits to the residents including an increase in the scholarship. These decrees did not recognize the quality of work the student-doctor performed, neither did it legalize the doctors' organizations. Hence, they refused to accept the decrees and started a strike on January 27, 1965. This was the first time in Mexican history that a group of people refused a presidential offer, thus casting serious doubts on the "infallibility" of the President.

Since presidential intervention was so drastically rejected the government put into effect a strategy to defeat the movement: division of the doctors, utilization of charro unionism through the FSTSE, satisfaction of some of the economic demands and, finally, repression.

Strictly speaking, neither the Alianza nor the AMMRI were labor unions. Still they were acting within the legal framework since both Article 123 of the Constitution and the Federal Labor Law permitted "any group of workers" to negotiate their demands with the employer.

A long drawn-out fight ensued between the FSTSE, unequivocally a charro union "solidly committed to membership in the official party ... pillar of the party's 'popular sector'" (Brandenburg, 1964:86), and



AMMRI-Alianza members. The Alianza defended its autonomy and sovereignty vis-à-vis the FSTSE "company union," and the FSTSE, in turn, insisted on its inherited right to mediate the doctors' complaints. The struggle was carried out mainly via newspapers who, with their known connections to government and therefore pro-government bias, managed to profoundly confuse the issues to the point where even AMMRI-Alianza members were misled. Thus, the leadership became deeply divided over the interpretation of events.

To confound issues even more newspapers now started their infamous slander campaigns. Members of AMMRI were labelled communist sympathizers since the most favorable accounts of the protests had appeared in those journals known to be "rabidly communist" (Excélsior, April 29, 1965).

In the midst of this confusion government officials and health services' authorities issued an ultimatum to the striking doctors. The doctors were to return to work on May 17, otherwise their jobs would be given to qualified applicants; the strikers would forfeit all pay from May 17 forward; there would be no more conciliatory meetings until work was resumed in all hospitals; the dispute over the legality of AMMRI would be submitted to the constitutionally authorized courts (Excélsior, May 14, 1965).

However, the response of the interns and residents to the fast multiplying condemnations and threats of loss of job and income was increased militancy. They continued their strike without neglecting emergency services, but they made their absence painfully known. When advertisements appeared in the newspapers by "concerned citizens" predicting that the traitorous physicians will receive harsher treatment in the future and demanding that the government put an end to the chaotic situation

(Excélsior, May 14, 1965), the stage was set for repressive action.

After the government's ultimatum expired on May 17 an unknown number of physicians were fired. The Veinte de Noviembre Hospital lost 203 doctors. Dismissals also occurred in hospitals in Monterrey, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua, and Jalapa (Excélsior, May 19, 1965). AMMRI leaders immediately called for a united front against the outrageous firings, and on May 26 about 5,000 doctors and nurses marched to the Zócalo. But despite their relatively large numbers the leaders gave up stating as the reason that they had exhausted their financial resources. On May 29 the membership voted to return to work (El Día, May 30, 1965).

However, since a new presidential decree to grant an across-the-board increase to fulltime physicians did not meet with the approval of AMMRI and Alianza members, they voted for a new strike set to begin August 24. Moreover, the original five-point petition of AMMRI had still not been attended to. "The FSTSE, as official voice of the workers of the State, opened the door to repression when it demanded the suspension of the strikers. And so, on August 26 the granaderos broke the strike in the hospitals Veinte de Noviembre, Colonia and Ruben Leñero. During the days which followed there were massive firings, expulsions and arrests of doctors. Blacklists of the activists were elaborated to prevent their employment in any other institution" (Punto Crítico, June, 1977:28). Thus, the first attempts by a professional group to unionize ended in repression, a foreboding of worse things to come.

The Student Movement, 1968



**LIBERTAD  
DE EXPRESION**

**MEXICO**

Poster from 1968 Student Movement

On July 26, 1968 a group of students belonging to the Central Nacional de Estudiantes Democráticos (CNED, National Central of Democratic Students) had obtained a permit to hold a demonstration to express their

solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. Another group of students from the Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Técnicos (FNET, National Federation of Technical Students) also had received a permit to march in a different part of the city to protest police brutality which had taken place a few days prior at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN, National Polytechnical Institute). When the two groups converged in the center of Mexico City they were met by about 1,000 riot police. Fighting broke out, shots were fired, people were wounded. The students retreated and barricaded themselves in nearby school buildings. Several hundred young persons were involved ranging from 12 to 16 years (El Día, July 27, 1968). The same day police agents and secret service men raided the headquarters of the Mexican Communist Party, justifying this act by stating that the PCM had been the instigator of the demonstrations, since some of its members had been seen in the marches (La Voz de México, August 4, 1968).

To the students, however, it was known that the FNET, after a long strike at the IPN in 1956, had become a powerful organization receiving support from the government while pretending to act independently. Thus, it was assumed that the FNET acted as provocateurs to give the police reason to intervene in the until then orderly and peaceful demonstration of the CNED. On July 28 students from the IPN and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM, National Autonomous University of Mexico),<sup>16</sup> two institutions which traditionally served different interests and purposes, thus dividing the students, came together to discuss the possibility of a strike unless the following demands were met: 1) the elimination of the FNET, the universities' porras, and the Movimiento Universitario de Renovadora Orientación (MURO, University Movement of

Renovating Orientation), an ultra-reactionary PRI faction; 2) the expulsion of student members of those groups, as well as PRI members; 3) indemnification to be paid to wounded students and to the families of those who died; 4) the release of all detained students; 5) the withdrawal of the granaderos and other repressive forces from universities and schools; 6) the derogation of article 145 of the Penal Code -- the anti-subversive law (Poniatowska, 1971:276).

In 1968, 80,000 students had enrolled in the UNAM including its affiliated preparatory schools; the IPN'S enrolment was up to 50,000. This number included registrations in several vocational schools scattered throughout the city. Faced by a mass student strike the authorities closed all institutions under their jurisdiction in the Federal District, which included all vocational institutes and the IPN. The UNAM as well suspended classes. On July 30 police blasted with a bazuka the main entrance of a school open to get at students barricaded there and detained 1,606 young people and hospitalized 65. This senseless use of force enraged students, professors and researchers at the UNAM, the IPN and even the liberal-minded Colegio de México, and caused them to protest publicly and to declare their solidarity with the students. Moreover, the bazuka blast so outraged public opinion that many Mexicans began to sympathize with the young people (El Día, August 1, 2, 1968).

On various occasions students held massive demonstrations to inform their fellow citizens through leafletting, postering, public dialogue, and guerrilla theatre that democracy did not exist in Mexico. They pointed to the sad fact that the press was monopolized by the government through control of printing paper and that, therefore, no unbiased reporting could

be expected from the media. The young people put into question hallowed myths, such as "national unity," "social participation in political decision-making," "harmony and equilibrium between the social classes," and other illusions inherited from the Mexican Revolution. They talked about the supposed independence of workers' and peasants' organizations and pointed to the struggles of the railroad men, the teachers, the doctors and others, who had fought to gain that independence. Even though the public memory is alleged to be short the young students remembered Demetrio Vallejo, Valentín Campa and other political prisoners, whose immediate release they demanded. Their eagerness to raise public awareness did not stop in the streets of Mexico City. They marched into the factories and went to the countryside to discuss the nation's multiple problems not forgetting the particular struggles of the common people in slums, working class neighborhoods, and the like. But most importantly, they challenged the President and political functionaries to discuss in public the issues the students had aired. The President, Díaz Ordaz, however, felt he could only lend "an outstretched hand" and hoped that the young persons would go away. But they did not. Notwithstanding the President's attempt to communicate with the students, his "discurso de la mano tendida" had, apart from its authoritarian rhetoric, a threatening overtone (Guevara Niebla, 1978:22).

The movement spread to other learning centers, and during mass demonstrations in August and September, 1968, 300,000 to one half million people from factories and unions, from barrios and the countryside, from modest and middle class backgrounds joined to let the world know they were fed up. Never before had post-Revolution Mexico seen such gigantic

demonstrations and such solidarity among its people.

And for the first time in Mexican history the presidential figure was not immune to being caricatured. People congregated in the Zócalo shouting at the National Palace: "Bigmouth, come out on the balcony. Where is your outstretched hand?" (Poniatowska, 1971:97).

Such disrespect for the time-honored superiority of the "supreme arbiter" was not taken lightly by Díaz Ordaz. He set his functionaries out to discredit the movement and to find justification for the use of the troops. The students were accused of sabotaging the Olympic Games scheduled for October 12 to 28. In addition, the mass media charged the students with committing subversive acts against the State, and the traditional scarecrow of "foreign agitators" helping the demonstrators to this effect convinced the authorities to force a showdown. On October 2 a meeting between various student groups and sympathizers was scheduled for 5.30 p.m. in the Plaza de Tlatelolco. About 10,000 persons attended. The events that followed read like a bad science fiction story; for Mexicans, however, they were a bloody reality. A police cordon surrounded the area. The meeting was orderly and pleas for non-violence were made. While speeches were pronounced, army vehicles occupied by helmeted and bayonet-bearing soldiers filled the surrounding streets (Stevens, 1974:232-233). There were thousands of soldiers and uniformed and secret police beginning to fire all kinds of weapons into the defenseless multitude (Ramírez, Vol. I, 1971:68). The exact number of how many young people and bystanders got killed was never made public. Hospitals and prisons were surrounded by police and no unofficial estimate could be made. According to Evelyn Stevens "heavy fire continued for about an hour, and burst out intermit-

tently thereafter until past midnight, with the soldiers aiming at anyone who moved" (1975:235). With about 10,000 people in the Plaza de Tlatelolco, which is practically a cul-de-sac since it is surrounded by buildings on all sides, an educated guess would point to hundreds dead and thousands wounded. Yet, the official count insisted that 49 individuals had been killed. A mass arrest followed with at least 2,000 demonstrators imprisoned. La noche de Tlatelolco, another sad milestone in the Mexican people's struggle against inequality, ended student militancy for some time. The National Strike Council of the students asked their members to return to classes on December 5, 1968 (El Día, Dec. 6, 1968).

The student demonstrations were marked by their heterogeneity both in terms of ideological convictions and social make-up. The young people realized that with the monopolization of industries in the hands of either foreign or government corporations they would be damned to a salaried life within either the government bureaucracies or the technocratic institutions. They became aware that once they ended their university careers they would not be able to work in independent positions as lawyers, doctors, engineers, and the like, as was the case in more traditional times, but that monopoly capitalism forced them to join the working class, should they be so lucky to receive jobs at all. The prospects of their own process of proletarianization made them express their solidarity with the masses. In the struggle for democracy they saw the only way out of the dilemma, at least for the time being. Their demonstrations took place perfectly well within the legal framework of the 1917 Constitution. In fact, the return to the laws of the Constitution was one of their main concerns. One of their slogans proclaimed "Respect for the Constitution."



In this sense, the student movement was reformist rather than revolutionary. It just pointed to the total bankruptcy of the Mexican political process and dispelled official mythology of "democracy" and "harmony." With their demand to press for public discussions for all Mexicans to hear they unveiled the contradiction between the régime's rhetoric about its revolutionary goals and its increasing insensitivity to the needs of its people. By rejecting the behind-the-scenes maneuvers of the politicians, the students were the first ones to transcend this traditional mode of governing the country. Their disrespect for the President seriously undermined the respectability of this office and its legitimacy in the minds of the population. Had the government accepted the invitation to public debate it might have encouraged other sectors to press for democratization as well. This, however, the régime could not tolerate without threatening the whole existing social structure to collapse.

Repression did not crush the movement towards democracy; it did, however, radicalize the consciousness of a great number of those involved. Many refused to retreat into private life and continued the struggle against Mexican authoritarianism, corruption, increasing social misery, and the like. Repression and the slaughter of young people may have frightened the majority away from overt actions, but the bitterness of 1968 cannot be erased.

The Electricians, 1976

Since the days of Porfirio Díaz the electrical industry had been dominated by two foreign monopolies until its nationalization in 1960.

The Mexican Light and Power Company, British owned, and the American Foreign Power Company, a United States monopoly, had absorbed national enterprises until they had cornered the electrical production. Both companies received great advantages concerning taxes, concessions and credit before and after the Mexican Revolution.

General Electric held a monopoly on the electrical manufacturing and technology market. During Obregón's and Calles' governments a GE-controlled holding company, the Electric Bond and Share Co. (EBASCO), purchased nearly all electrical power enterprises except for those held by Mexlight. "GE began manufacturing in Mexico in 1929 to supply the growing market created by EBASCO, and by using the same price-fixing techniques they expanded rapidly together. Electrical power had become the single largest sector of foreign investment by 1940" (NACLA, Sept-Oct 1977:6). However, because of relatively low electricity rates to consumers and industry after 1940, the multinational corporations did not make quite as large a profit as they intended. Repeatedly they tried to pressure the Mexican government into increasing the rates, but the government refused. Thus in 1960 Mexlight and EBASCO were nationalized with the consent of both companies. Yet, nationalization was not the triumph over imperialism it had appeared at the time. "The government paid a total of \$122 million for the outdated installations, far above their book value" (NACLA, Sept-Oct 1977:9) leaving Mexico with a stagnating industry.

Aside from financial problems, the electrical industry was also beset by serious labor conflicts. Before nationalization the electricians' unions were divided into three major federations: 1) the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME, Mexican Union of Electricians) belonging to

the Mexican Light and Power Company. The SME maintained itself outside of the CTM. 2) the Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria y Comunicaciones Eléctricas (FNTICE, National Federation of Workers of Industry and Electric Communications -- in 1960 to become the Sindicato de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana (STERM, Union of Electrical Workers of the Mexican Republic) -- pertaining to the American Foreign Power Company. The FNTICE attempted to unify the collective contracts, which were as diverse and heterogeneous as the local unions of the electricians dispersed throughout the country. It also tried to counter-arrest centralization and to maintain union democracy. Like the SME it remained outside the structure of the CTM. 3) Under Cárdenas the Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE, Federal Commission of Electricity) was established to which belonged the Sindicato Nacional de Electricistas, Similares y Conexos de la República Mexicana (SNESCRM, National Union of Electricians, Similar and Connected Industries of the Mexican Republic -- or SNE for short). This union always had received the support of the CFE and consequently became integrated into the CTM. It differed from the other two insofar as it was characterized by the centralization of power in the hands of a national committee and by the scarce participation of its members (Gómez Tagle & Miquet, 1976:151-171).

After nationalization the electrical power industry faced the task of restructuring the industry to make it more efficient and to free itself from the huge deficit it had accumulated. Attempts were made to integrate all three unions into the CTM to neutralize their power and to better control them. However, an intense inter-union struggle ensued posing the threat to the government that three powerful unions might unite outside of

the official institutionalized structure.

The STERM and its secretary general, Rafael Galván, remained true to their democratic principles. The CFE, which favored the SNE and its secretary general, Francisco Pérez Ríos, clearly saw that a move towards democratization and political independence of the union from the CTM and the PRI would threaten the status quo. As a result, the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration awarded the collective contract to the SNE only, thus trying to give the death blow to the STERM (Huacuja & Woldenberg, 1976:46). However, the STERM's response was different than expected. Together with the Movimiento Sindical Ferrocarrilero (MSF, Railroad Workers Union Movement) the STERM called for mass demonstrations in over 40 cities, which were not only attended by the electricians, but also by workers from other industries together with students, peasants and slum dwellers (NACLA, Sept-Oct, 1977:31). The huge mobilizations of the STERM finally convinced Luis Echeverría to intervene and to promote the unification of the two competing unions, the STERM and SNE. Thus emerged on November 20, 1972 the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana (SUTERM, the Only Union of the Electrical Workers of the Mexican Republic). Pérez Ríos became the new secretary general of the SUTERM, and Rafael Galván was given second place as head of grievances.

The STERM had agreed to compromise with the President's suggestion, being swayed by his nationalist sentiments. Galván also believed it easier to work towards democratization and the ouster of "charro" Pérez Ríos within the new union. In addition, "the democratic forces within the SUTERM were strengthened in this period by the incorporation of a small but well organized and militant union of employees of the National Institute

of Nuclear Energy. The nuclear workers were led by Antonio Gershensen, Arturo Whaley and other Marxists who had been student activists in the 1968 Movement" (NACLA, Sept-Oct, 1977:31).

However, the CTM-supported forces of Pérez Ríos were active as well. When, in 1974, local union leaders signed a collective contract with General Electric without consulting the union members, the rank and file went on strike. The usual slander campaign against the strikers by the business community and CTM officials appeared in the press again, and when the strike at General Electric spilled over to the entire labor movement, the Pérez Ríos faction, the authorities of GE, and Echeverría's government sent in 800 armed goons backed up by riot police and tanks. As a result some electricians returned to work.

In March 1975 the "charra" direction supported by Fidel Velázquez called an extraordinary congress during which Rafael Galván and half the National Executive Committee of the SUTERM were expelled. The flagrant abuse of power caused thousands of people to pour out into the streets to demonstrate. The protests culminated in one mass mobilization in Mexico City in November 1975 where close to 200,000 electricians and supporters marched through the streets. The newly formed "Democratic Tendency" of the SUTERM received support from the railroad workers, government employees, telephone trade unionists, the unions of the UNAM's employees and academics, and many others. Present were also members of political parties and independent peasant organizations. The massive support convinced the Democratic Tendency to call a national general strike for July 16, 1976 to demand the reinstatement of the leadership. Immediately, the Attorney General declared that the strike would be illegal. The CTM mobilized its

forces and the business sector made its opinion known as well (Excélsior, June 22, 1976). Before the strike could take place troops occupied the major electrical installations in Mexico City and 25 other cities and within a short time scabs manned the electricians' jobs while the army protected them (Punto Crítico, July 27, 1976). The government arrested leaders of the Democratic Tendency, as well as other militant persons. The nuclear workers were expelled from the SUTERM and were forced to join a union of government employees, who by law have no right to strike.

Rank and file workers were demoralized and returned to work, but they began to seriously reevaluate the ideology and strategy of their forces and to rebuild their shattered base.

Perhaps the most important error in the SUTERM's Democratic Tendency was to believe in the myth of "revolutionary nationalism" and to seek an alliance with the Echeverría government. They did not question Echeverría's motives thinking he was genuinely returning to the almost forgotten principles of the Mexican Revolution, rescuing its social base (Excélsior, June 22, 1976). However, by the 1970s not only private Mexican enterprises had linked up with foreign capital but public companies had as well. Consequently, the state has a direct interest in the maintenance of the existing structure of the system. Moreover, the Democratic Tendency overlooked the fact that the state was responsible for the growth of monopoly capitalism, since it had built the infrastructure, granted tax concessions to private industry and supplied it with cheap energy. Furthermore, the independent labor movement has not learned its lessons from the 1930s, when Vicente Lombardo Toledano's call for an alliance of the working class with the government against imperialism resulted in its subordination and control.

CHAPTER IV: THE UNIVERSITY UNION MOVEMENT, 1977

We are moving from illusion toward life.  
The abyss does not stop us; when the  
water is falling over the precipice it  
is most beautiful. If we die, we shall  
die like suns, diffusing light.

Ricardo Flores Magón, Land and Liberty

Prelude to the Conflict

The conflict at the National University in 1977 has not been an isolated phenomenon. It has to be interpreted in the light of the continuous struggle of a large number of the Mexican working class, middle class and intellectuals to change the authoritarian corporate structures -- be they union confederations, the official party or the institution of the presidency -- into organisms truly representative of the people. The immense popular pressures of the fifties and sixties caused Echeverría's "apertura democrática," a first stumbling step in pacifying the uproar of the multitudes. José López Portillo's electoral reform program had similar roots. But, even though the Socialist Party of the Workers, the Mexican Communist Party, and the right-wing Mexican Democratic Party have been legalized on May 2, 1978 (LAPR, May 12, 1978), the country has not become more democratic. The electoral reform's purpose was intended to coopt and pacify middle class intellectuals and thus deprive independent movements of their leadership. Moreover, the reformed electoral system incorporates mechanisms which will prevent effectively opposition parties from gaining power, let alone threatening the ruling PRI. To be able to register, parties require at least 65,000 signatures. The Communist Party, "which has long been

heavily infiltrated by the security services, is now being allowed to develop more independently, but is behaving with great circumspection. ... In no way is it a threat" (LAPR, Oct. 14, 1977), neither is the Socialist Party of the Workers since it had been formed from within the PRI.

José López Portillo took power on December 1, 1976. His domestic policy is quite reassuring for the private sector since he has gone out of his way to conciliate both domestic and foreign companies. Ironically, his philosophy of government has been described in the words of Porfirio Díaz: poca política, mucha administración (little politics, lots of administration). He does not think Mexico is underdeveloped, rather he believes it is underadministered. His government's goals are better administration and greater political control, as well as the consolidation of his own power base "from which to confront the manoeuvrings of Mexico's conflicting power groups -- the transnationals and private industry, the big landowners, the peasant organisations, the official trade unions and the apparatus of the PRI itself" (LAPR, June 23, 1978). As always, when an administration changes, political functionaries are substituted by those loyal to and in agreement with the new President's worldview. López Portillo chose to select several of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz' men to serve him in Congress. But the parallel with the Díaz Ordaz' régime does not end here. Widespread attacks on universities in Mexico City, Guerrero, Nayarit, Zacatecas, Oaxaca and Tamaulipas, where students and staff protested against the violation of university autonomy and corrupt officials, have been made by the new administration. The everlasting leader of the CTM, Fidel Velázquez, brandished the universities as breeding grounds for revolution



thanks to the actions of independent unions and even the Church, who were preparing for a spring revolution allegedly organized by terrorist groups. The worst blow for the independent left came when Raúl Mendiola Cerecero -- one of the police chiefs whom the students in 1968 wanted to see dismissed -- received the position of commander of the judicial police after six years in retirement (LAPR, Feb. 11, 1977).

Concerning the relations with the United States, López Portillo "charmed and cajoled political leaders, businessmen, Jewish organizations and the public at large into believing that Mexico really was a friendly neighbor and that ex-President Luis Echeverría's irritating ways had been a mere passing aberration. The results included a good press, promises of support from the Carter administration, assurances from big U.S. companies that the flow of capital to Mexico would be renewed, the initiation of negotiations for new loans from private banks in Chicago, and the lifting of the Jewish organizations' boycott on travel to Mexico" (LAPR, Feb. 25, 1977). The boycott had been imposed after Mexico had voted that Zionism was a form of racism in the United Nations in November 1975.

In his first informe of September 1, 1977, López Portillo made a few highflying statements which certainly contradicted his policies towards the resolution of the National University's conflict, as we shall see below. The "new style" he proposed included careful reflection of government policies and the eradication of paternalism. Concerning the enormous economic problems faced by a majority of the population, he appealed to workers and peasants to be patient. The economic crisis had not been beaten, but thanks to the working class, which had received only a 10 per cent wage increase in 1977 while the peso had been devalued almost 100 per-

cent, "much progress had been made and the future could look bright" (LAPR, Sept. 9, 1977). He admonished the employers, Cárdenas-style, that they had not pulled their weight in the "Alliance for Production," and he added that if they did not cooperate with his philosophy "La Solución Somos Todos" (we all are the solution), he would most certainly intervene. However, he did not state what exactly he meant by intervention, and it is doubtful that he was actually in a position to force private enterprise into cooperation given the almost \$30 billion debt of the government.

Concerning his political reform design the President voiced the opinion that "dissidence is not synonymous with violence, and opposition should not be associated with crime" (LAPR, Sept. 5, 1977). The incomprehensible question arises here: Why did he just about 2 months earlier order 12,000 granaderos and an undetermined number of secret agents to occupy the National University in the early morning hours and arrest all those who peacefully and within their constitutional rights carried on a strike? And why was the army moved in to end a strike by telephone workers in April 1978?

It should also not be forgotten that López Portillo, in spite of having won the "election," was not the favored candidate of many Mexicans. He had been handpicked by Echeverría, and he was the only candidate. The government-controlled loyal opposition, the PAN and the PPS, were unable to produce their usual token candidates to at least keep up the appearance of a democratic election. López Portillo's real opposition were those Mexicans who abstained from casting their vote. Apparently, abstentionism was as high as 40 percent. Only the Communist Party encouraged dissidents to vote for its secretary general, Valentín Campa, as a "write-in" candi-

date, which, however, automatically invalidated the ballot since the PCM was not a legally registered party. Notwithstanding, Valentín Campa obtained 1.6 million votes, a fact which López Portillo could not ignore. The inconformity of the people compelled the governments to think of and implement reform programs, if they do not want the "Mexican powder keg" (Vancouver Sun, June 23, 1978) to ignite and blow the whole system into bits and pieces. López Portillo's promise that Mexico will "go neither to the left, nor to the right, but the Mexican way" will not be enough to satisfy the landhunger of the peasants and the demands for democracy, independence and autonomy of a growing number of demystified Mexicans. It seems that López Portillo desires to be identified with the still admired image of Cárdenas, who, as we may recall, wanted to establish neither socialism nor capitalism, but a system particularly Mexican. López Portillo's "Mexican way" translates into class conciliation to the absurd degree of redefining the PRI as a "workers' party," where a worker is anyone who works, including industrialists, bankers, and the like.

With congressional elections coming up next year [1979], the first since the introduction of the electoral reform, the government is anxious for the PRI to appear on the side of the people. It also knows that eventually it may well find itself in conflict with the highly conservative private sector when it comes to decisions on how to distribute the country's new-found oil wealth. An alliance with labour, however formal, accompanied by suitable populist rhetoric, is an essential insurance policy (LAPR, Aug. 18, 1978).

The economic panorama in 1977 was the following: For the first time in 22 years the peso had been devalued tremendously. It dropped from 12.50 pesos per U.S. dollar to 23-24 pesos per U.S. dollar. Consequently, the prices for all necessary consumer goods, particularly the imports, rose excessively. In the case of medicines "80 % of medicaments have increased

their price by 100 to 500 % with no end in sight" (El Día, July 6, 1977). These price increases cause additional hardship to those "20 million of Mexicans [who] are practically unprotected in matters of health and medical attention....High rates of mortality prevail specifically because of respiratory sicknesses, gastrointestinal sufferings, and multiple forms of parasitosis caused by an inadequate economic, social, educational and nutritional situation" (Excélsior, July 7, 1977).

Because of Echeverría's expressions of sympathy for and identification with so-called Third World countries, foreign investors panicked and retaliated by refusing to invest in the Mexican economy. To make up for the lack of foreign investment the Mexican government stepped in, but very soon it exhausted public resources and had to borrow heavily from international financial institutions. The World Bank lent Mexico 120 million dollars to finance partially the second stage of the Program of Public Investment for Rural Development and 42 million dollars to promote the tourist industry in Baja California Sur. Seventy percent of the resources of this Program are supposed to be destined for cattle raising, irrigation projects, fruit and vegetable production, conservation of land and water, and the installation of agro-industries. Twenty percent of the money would be invested in infrastructure, such as roads and electrification, and 10 percent has been set aside for drinkable water, schools and medical services (El Día, July 6, 1977). While the Mexican government believes that these investments will accelerate the economic progress of the country, it forgets that its foreign debt is already 30 billion dollars, and the new loans are taxing the population even heavier. Moreover, the formation of new agro-industries will displace the existing ejidos. The government

promised the ejidatarios some indemnization and the creation of jobs for them. However, with 50 to 60 percent of already existing unemployment and underemployment it strikes one as sheer cynicism on the part of the régime, particularly since the agro-industries will not need a large labor force since they operate mainly with labor-saving machinery.

López Portillo, quite aware of the destructive dimensions of under- and unemployment, realized that his call for an "Alliance for Production," in which both state and private business agreed to invest in Mexican industries to create jobs and to manufacture more goods for export to earn foreign money, did not work out. The dependent labor movement headed by Fidel Velázquez cooperated with the President's plan and did not demand more than 10 percent wage increases, a condition imposed by the International Monetary Fund in return for a loan of 3 billion dollars. However, the industrialists did not hold up their end of the bargain, and the President noticed that the present economic austerity program was bought at too high a social cost. Again reminiscent of Cárdenas he "warned that the government would not allow wealthy people to send their money out of the country" (LAER, Aug. 12, 1978).

The highly influential Business Coordinating Council felt threatened by the President's repeated allusions to force businessmen to pull their weight in his "Alliance for Progress." They organized a lobby to pressure the government for their demands. "Outstanding among these are a free price market, a government assurance that it will not introduce a 40-hour working week (the present week is 48 hours), lower rates for public utilities and no more tax reforms" (LAPR, Nov. 4, 1977).

Moreover, foreign firms are now allowed again to be holding more than 49 percent of the stock in joint companies set up with Mexican interests (LAER, Sept. 30, 1977). Apart from the fact that the program of "Mexicanization" has never worked, this new policy delivers control and domination of industries officially into foreign hands.

Similarly, United States' President Jimmy Carter's harsh stand on Mexican braceros working in that country might bring an unmanageable social unrest. To alleviate the already explosive border situation Carter promised the Mexican President aid in establishing rural agro-businesses to employ those Mexicans who would otherwise migrate to the United States (LAER, Aug. 26, 1977). However, this type of aid is as useless for Mexico as another desert, since the agro-industries are not labor-intensive and are, moreover, mainly owned by U.S. citizens. In other words, the United States is aiding United States' companies, and Mexicans resent it for very good reasons.

Mexico's newly discovered oil reserves may be its salvation or its damnation. José Santiago Acevedo, exploration superintendent for the state-owned Petroleos Mexicanos, confirms that "Mexico will be in a position to challenge OPEC markets by the mid-1980s" (Vancouver Sun, June 28, 1978). The United States, facing itself a serious energy crisis, is, of course, enormously interested in tapping Mexico's rich oil reserves. Suddenly, there are no restrictions on the amount of money Mexico can borrow from the International Monetary Fund to finance a 750 mile pipeline from Tabasco to the United States to provide "U.S. homes and industries with 2.2 billion cubic feet of gas daily within five years" (International Bulletin, Oct. 24, 1977). Many Mexicans are worried about the export of

their natural resources, preferring it to be used for national construction. In an attempt to diversify oil exports, López Portillo went to Russia in May 1978 to negotiate a deal to supply Cuba with Mexican instead of Russian oil. However, Washington expressed sharp irritation with Cuban and Soviet activities in Africa, and "there is now speculation in Mexico that in present circumstances the United States would not view favourably a deal which would be so advantageous to the Russians and Cubans" (LAPR, June 2, 1978). As a result the deal fell through.

With this political and economic scenario in mind it is easy to understand why in recent years popular unrest and labor insurgency has been on the rise. Moreover, despite his populist assurances and his threats to the business class, López Portillo let himself be dined and wined by Bernardo Garza Sada, leader of the Monterrey industrialists who are the richest and most conservative in Mexico (LAER, April 8, 1977), casting serious doubts on his motivations concerning the "Alliance for Production."

Enter the Union of the National University's Workers



STUNAM Poster 1977 -- demanding one National University Union and a Collective Contract

Since 1968, and even before that year, tranquillity had never been part of any of the Mexican universities. The UNAM was particularly hard hit with the introduction of the porras, falcons, and other paramilitary provocateurs, and with the resignation of the liberal rector, Pablo González Casanova, on December 7, 1972 the UNAM's destiny changed drastically. On January 3, 1973 the government chose Guillermo Soberón, a United States educated scientist, as the new rector. Soberón was clearly not the



popular choice. His inauguration was branded by the occupation of his offices by students, teachers, and workers (Hofstadter, 1974:136-137).

Soberón immediately set out to gear teaching towards the technocratic requirements of the public and private corporations operating in Mexico. His explicit intent was to affect a less critical attitude of the students towards the university and the state. His goal was to mold the students into unthinking, uncritical automatons, who would run the technical machinery of an industrial society. However, he had forgotten or perhaps was never aware that Mexico is still 50 percent an agrarian society as well as industrially underdeveloped. He insisted that "he was not a political person" (Huacuja & Woldenberg, 1976:106), and initiated a chain of violation of university autonomy when he repeatedly invited the police to remove peasants who had rested on university grounds. He also had three academic members of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences detained in 1973.

To counteract the extremely conservative approach of the new rector the employees of the UNAM formed a union and somewhat later the academic personnel and investigators did the same. The government reacted negatively to the union drives declaring university personnel "employees of exception" since they belonged neither to private corporations nor to public enterprises, even though the university is a public institution funded by the state. Maintenance and administrative employees of the UNAM, however, declared a strike on October 25, 1972 demanding the recognition of the Sindicato de Trabajadores y Empleados de la UNAM (STEUNAM, Union of Workers and Employees of the UNAM) and the signing of a collective contract with the university authorities. The STEUNAM triumphed, and it received its

collective bargaining agreement on January 15, 1973. During its five years of existence the STEUNAM has secured for its members a higher minimum wage than anywhere in the country, a working week of 32 to 40 hours, security of work, and most significantly, the decisions within the STEUNAM were made democratically through assemblies and meetings. In addition, it refreshingly lacked charro leadership.

The Sindicato del Personal Académico de la UNAM (SPAUNAM, Union of the Academic Personnel of the UNAM), which included professors, researchers, sessional lecturers and parttime academic personnel, also democratic and independent from the CTM, emerged in June 1975 as a response to the increasing proletarianization of professors and investigators. Since the UNAM has satellite centers all over Mexico City professors were subjected to pass their days driving from one branch to the other to give classes. These teachers have been nicknamed "taxi professors." The SPAUNAM's concerns were not exclusively economic, but included considerations of a political and social nature, as well. They saw their proletarianization as a necessary by-product of the process of monopolization, and they worried about the explosive enrolment at the UNAM, which changed teaching profoundly, since professors had to take on a massive teaching load, but did not get paid better. The growth of the University has also accentuated its financial dependence on the state, who insists that teaching be done on pro-government lines. All of these aspects caused the academic personnel to form their own union (Cordera, 1975:IX).

According to Arnaldo Córdova not even 10 percent of all the professors of the UNAM were employed full time, and the majority of the professors did not even earn the minimum salary which is guaranteed to the workers.

With admiring frankness he added that "the immense majority of university professors earn hunger salaries which are not even enough to buy a Volkswagen for 46,000 pesos" (1975:X).

The SPAUNAM was guided by the most rigorous democratic procedures. The assemblies and its affiliates at all levels were the union authority. There was no place for charrismo. The elected executive committee was responsible to and controlled by the general assemblies. The highly politicized SPAUNAM and the somewhat moderate STEUNAM were two new massive, democratic and independent organizations, whose goals were not only limited to university affairs but extended to seek alternatives for the democratic transformation of the whole nation.

Early in 1977 the two unions recognized that as separate organizations their power to negotiate with the authorities had become minimal and that they had, in fact, reached a dead-end road in their collective bargaining agreements. Thus, on March 27, 1977, during a constitutive assembly, the united union of administrative and academic personnel, the Sindicato de Trabajadores de la UNAM (STUNAM, Union of the Workers of the UNAM) was born. Five hundred and sixteen representatives voted for unification, 91 were against and 219 abstained. Evaristo Pérez Arreola was elected secretary general, and Nicolás Olivos Cuéllar, Eliézer Morales Aragón, Alvaro Lechuga, Pablo Pascual Moncayo and Joel Ortega Juárez received positions in finances, education, organization, propaganda and vigilance. Their next major project was to register the new union with the Secretaría de Trabajo (Labor Ministry) and to implement the demands of their collective contract, which were: labor relations between the UNAM and its employees to be regulated by this Contract; to create Mixed Commissions with parity

for representatives of the STUNAM and the University authorities to regulate conciliation and resolution of conflicts, admission, promotion and assignment of the academic personnel, and seniority rank; assignment of working hours, wage policies, hygiene and security. The same Mixed Commissions were to be established in all satellites of the UNAM. Income and promotion of professors and researchers were to be regulated by academic criteria and not by bureaucratic tendencies; working conditions -- security, health, leisure, workload and adequate psychological conditions -- to be guaranteed in each satellite by the respective Mixed Commissions; to establish a Social Service Union Store for all University employees; to increase wages by 20 percent; fringe benefits, such as scholarships for employees and their families; the creation of a Cultural Center; installation of a dental clinic and a dining area; child care facilities for employees who work a minimum of 20 hours per week or 650 pesos per month instead; financial aid to be secured for life and travel insurances, retirement, sickness, accidents in UNAM vehicles, etc. (Field Notes, May, 1977).

As could be expected the university authorities together with López Portillo's administration tried every imaginable approach to prevent the registration of the STUNAM. The rector of the UNAM, Soberón, even proposed a modification of constitutional article 123 to add to sections A and B, which regulate factory workers' and office employees' rights and obligations, a section "C." The rationale for this modification was that the university was neither a private nor public enterprise and that, therefore, its academic personnel ought to be directed by a separate labor section, which takes into account the characteristics of the institutions of superior

education (Caprizo, 1976:50). So far, the university as a state institution included faculty members into the category of state employees. When in 1972 and in 1975 the STEUNAM and SPAUNAM emerged, it was in response to the lack of an institutional mechanism to defend the rights of university workers and faculty. The rector and the University Council, in fact, did not question so much the UNAM's personnel's wish to unionize; what they objected to was the political impact such unionization would entail. Thus, section "C," if it were implemented, would put professors and researchers of all the nation's colleges and universities in a separate category, divorced from the administrative employees, who would be covered under section "B," and the maintenance workers, whose duties would be laid down in section "A" of article 123. In other words, Soberón's proposal would have been an ingenious device in neutralizing, atomizing, and depoliticizing the National University's union movement. At the same time the illusion would have persisted that the university authorities were not anti-union since the personnel would be represented by their respective organizations directed by leaders selected by the university, the CTM, and ultimately the PRI and the government. The perfect solution to the bourgeoisie's problems. However, the "unmanageable" and "undisciplined" members of several university communities did not think highly of the rector's and the Council's authoritarian and paternalistic suggestions. A spokesperson for the SPAUNAM, Jacobo Casillas Mármol, insisted that secondary and higher education be democratized at the national level and that access to higher education be granted to the working masses; that the organisms of university government as well as the national government be democratized; academic content to be reformulated

to respond to the needs of the Mexican people, particularly the dispossessed classes; and that the mechanisms for negotiation could be accomplished only through the formation of a union (1976:7). He, furthermore, iterated the unions' position to engage in a constructive dialogue with the rector and the Council to arrive at agreeable solutions, without, however, renouncing the rights the Mexican workers had conquered very often at cost of their own lives. The tremendous change in attitudes of professors and researchers, who fought Soberón's regressive proposal, is best expressed by Paulina Salas de Sosa, a representative of the STEUNAM: "We wish to reiterate once more our conviction that as university workers we fall into the same category as all other salaried workers of the country" (Oct., 1976:15). In a debate with those who wanted to enforce Section "C" she continued to confront the conservative elements with the following statements for which she received enthusiastic applause from members of the STEUNAM and SPAUNAM:

- 1) As workers we sell our labor power; we invest physical and mental energy, and we produce by means of instructing those who will be in charge of the cultural, scientific, social and political development of the country.
- 2) As workers we receive part of the social wealth, that is, a salary.
- 3) Like all workers we are subordinated to an organizer or a boss, who gives orders, and who practically acts like any patrón, not only in the organization of work, but also in all other respects.
- 4) Like all workers we have exercised our constitutional rights: we formed a union to defend our interests, and we want to have our work relations regulated by a collective bargaining agreement.
- 5) We are not different from the rest of Mexican workers.
- 6) The universities are not in a crisis because of strikes, but because of authoritarianism, corruption and anti-democratic processes prevailing in most of them.
- 7) The rights of unionization and strike are within the law and are inalienable rights (Salas de Sosa, 1976:15).

The remarkable new theme of a great number of academic personnel was a turning away from the traditional elitist and conservative methods of

education and towards the democratic, scientific, critical and popular university. The university was to attend to the cultural, economic and social necessities of the nation and should not be a separate island, which produces professionals for the perpetuation of the status quo. In that sense the student movement of 1968 was an apprenticeship for many who were now instructing or investigating at the universities.

The STUNAM faced a formidable task of unification of the base since only 8,000 persons affiliated initially (Estrategia, May-June, 1977:41), while the university employed 14,000 administrative and maintenance workers and 18,000 academic personnel. Within three months the STUNAM called assemblies and conferences in more than 50 satellites of the UNAM, the IPN, and the Colegios de Ciencias y Humanidades (CCH, Colleges of the Sciences and Humanities) to explain the character of the new union. The delegates of the STUNAM met with student organizations, as well, to promote the formation of committees to support a planned strike in the event that the rector and the University Council rejected the collective contract. Moreover, STUNAM delegates travelled all across the country to visit various universities and to ask for expressions of solidarity in case of a strike. Furthermore, the STUNAM did not neglect to give its support to demonstrations and strikes occurring at that time.

On Mayday 1977, 15,000 workers, students, teachers, professors, peasants, slum dwellers and members of political parties pledged their support to the independent movements and the STUNAM. While this number seems rather small if compared with the one million who apparently showed up in support of the CTM and López Portillo's administration, it should not be forgotten that the PRI and the CTM pay all costs of transportation to

the meeting place and hand out free lunches and drinks to the participants. Without these "incentives" it is doubtful that many individuals would bother to appear. The 15,000 independent demonstrators had to apply their own resources. In addition, even though their numbers seem small, the government feels sufficiently threatened to warrant police on motorbikes to surround the demonstrators, and to dispatch four more busses, which passed this writer while walking down the Paseo de la Reforma to the First of May demonstrations, loaded with riot police equipped with helmets, shields, clubs, machine guns and other repressive materials, to ensure the peaceful progression of the demonstration. However, the movements' vigilantes, wary of paramilitary provocateurs, guaranteed the orderly and peaceful conduct of its members in order not to give the police any reason to intervene.

The government and the university authorities refused to grant the collective bargaining agreement and to recognize the new union because they intended to include the academic personnel into the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE, National Union of Education Workers), which is part of the bureaucratic Federación de los Sindicatos de Trabajadores de la Educación (FSTE, Federation of the Unions of Education Workers) ultimately integrated into the Congreso del Trabajo and the PRI. Pressure from the STUNAM, however, prevented the rector from including professors and researchers into the "charro" organization of the SNTE, and it also caused Soberón to cancel his project, Section "C." However, he remained intransigent with regard to the recognition of the STUNAM.

On June 17, 1977 the Secretaría de Gobernación intervened to force the university authorities to discuss the STUNAM's petition with its represen-



tatives. This first session ended with the rector's absurd proposition to accept the change of the name STEUNAM to STUNAM but excluding faculty and researchers. The STUNAM unanimously rejected that proposition.

The second session took place on June 18. The STUNAM insisted on the inclusion of faculty and researchers into the new union, but made provisions to cooperate with the rector in the design of national legislation to regulate labor relations in the universities, since the sadly celebrated section "C" had not materialized. Soberón rejected this counterproposition. He strongly valued the hierarchical structure of the university with him at the top as the decision-maker, and he had no use for such "idealistic" notions as parity, cooperation, and direct democracy. His authoritarianism and paternalism even surpassed those of the President of the nation.

During the third session on June 19 the STUNAM offered the same project receiving the same answers as the day before. The fourth session took place on the morning of June 20 but resulted in the same intransigence which had characterized the previous days. Thus, at exactly 12 o'clock noon on June 20, 1977, the red and black flags of the STUNAM were raised all over the University, as well as libraries, archives, and UNAM satellites throughout the city, and the strike began.

While the representatives of the STUNAM had conferred with the authorities, several sympathy and solidarity manifestations had taken place in Mexico City and in other universities in the country. Moreover, "the universities of Oaxaca, Zacatecas, Nayarit, and Guerrero; the IPN, the Normal, the CCHs and other educational centers had been the scene where police, the army, porras and halcones ... had attacked the institutions with impunity to destroy the popular and union demands of the teachers

and students" (Punto Crítico, June 1977:4). Thus, on June 10, 1977 the STUNAM, supported by the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Workers' Party, the Frente Nacional de Acción Popular (FNAP, National Front of Popular Action),<sup>17</sup> the doctors, electricians and the Coordinated Students took to the streets to show their discontent with the divisionist tactics utilized by the government and the university authorities. In that march, 25,000 to 30,000 persons participated surrounded by riot police and undercover agents carrying submachine guns and other repressive hardware.

At the same time in another part of the city a student demonstration occurred at the Normal with 7,000 individuals protesting the President's nefarious political reform, demanding popular education and supporting the strike of the STUNAM. In spite of provocations by porras and halcones the students kept the march peaceful and orderly, ignoring the insults and physical threats of the provocateurs. The students' tremendous patience and absolute self-control was necessary since they were again surrounded by "many police motorcyclists, a cordon of granaderos being protected by more police on motorcycles behind them, three trucks equipped with anti-riot gear, four vans with grenade throwers and police with dogs; in front of the National Lottery 500 granaderos were stationed" (Punto Crítico, June, 1977:4). The extreme mobilization of repressive forces may, perhaps, best be interpreted in the terms of Fidel Velázquez "predicting" in Spring 1977 a Summer revolution in the universities. As the STUNAM conflict proceeded this assumption appears to have been the overriding concern of the régime and the university authorities and explains the overwhelming presence of the upholders of "law and order" at every demonstration, testifying to the alienation of the government from the people whose

intentions did not fall outside constitutional law.

The demonstration on June 18 was outstanding, because it differed in various ways from previous ones. It was called by the FNAP, an organization uniting 300 independent movements, to support the demands of the STUNAM. Fifty thousand participated listening to discourses pronounced by Héctor Barba of the FNAP and Evaristo Pérez Arreola of the STUNAM. Both talked about the necessity of the strike so that the University's union would not fall into the hands of the officially recognized SNTE. This realistic assessment was based on the heterogeneous background of faculty, some of whom had chosen to support Soberón in his endeavors. Barba and Pérez Arreola urged that the struggle did not stop with university democratization, but that Mexicans would have to fight against imperialism and for socialism. However, the leaders made never quite clear how exactly the struggle against imperialism should be carried out and how the socialist alternative would be constructed. Moreover, with these speeches they played into the hands of the already paranoid government, which had more reason to believe that a revolution was in the making. After all, historically the transition to socialism has been conquered by revolution. Still, the STUNAM was the first organization to talk openly about the need for socialism. This change reflects a new awareness that democracy within dependent capitalism is no way out of Mexico's political, economic and social impasse.

#### The Strike

Fourteen thousand administrative employees, maintenance workers,

professors and researchers went on strike on June 20, 1977 (Diario de México, July 14, 1977). The strike was immediately declared illegal by the University's lawyer, Diego Valadés. His reasoning was that "the fact that one union changes its name or that two unify into only one, is not a motive to ignore labor agreements made before. The UNAM will not revise the labor relations with its administrative and manual workers until February 1979, and those of the academics until November 1978, the dates when previous agreements made expire" (El Sol de México, June 21, 1977). Furthermore, in the same newspaper appeared the same day a one-page advertisement written by the University's Dirección General de Información aimed at the University Community and Public Opinion reiterating the lawyer's statements and unequivocally threatening the STUNAM should the strike continue: "The University will not continue to allow a system of permanent labor instability, neither will it passively accept an escalation of successive work stoppages" (op.cit., author's emphasis). This message, combined with the declaration of the illegality of the strike one day after it had started, as well as the state's reaction to similar movements in the past should have been a warning to the members of the STUNAM that stormy weather lay ahead with repression as the final result, particularly when taking into account the known PRI-connections of Soberón. Aware that different political parties and a heterogeneity of ideological currents operated within the UNAM he asked: "What objective could the fragmentation into a mosaic of political parties serve?" (El Martillo, June 18, 1977:4). Thinking dialectically, one would like to counterpose the question: Why fragment the universities with several unions and associations guided by different labor codes and statutes? Since the university exists within the

greater society it is part of the convulsions shaking that society. Furthermore, Soberón reserved the right to act politically for himself, even though he insisted that he was not a political person and that the university community should remain apolitical. Moreover, Soberón personally visited López Portillo during his presidential campaign pledging his loyalty to the future President -- an extremely political act. In addition, he used his position as rector as a political trampoline to aim for the governorship of Guerrero or the directorship of the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance (Avanzada, June 1977:6). As the imposition of the PRI he instituted the educational policies advocated by the official party and consequently by the state. Nevertheless, within the PRI he sided with the most conservative sector opposing the mild political reform program of the government.

While the authorities and the newspapers played out their well-known roles attacking the STUNAM -- Paralyzed University; The Strike, an Illegal Movement; They Seek Political Positions; 250,000 Students and 18,000 Professors are affected -- the strikers handed out leaflets throughout Mexico City to counteract the propaganda and the distorted reporting of the government-controlled press. They boarded busses to explain the STUNAM's goals and purposes to the passengers. In their leaflet "Por qué estamos en lucha" (Why we are fighting) the STUNAM declared that 1) they wanted not only a collective contract signed but also solicited a wage increase of 20 percent (the government was prepared to grant only 10 percent) and the reinstatement of the workers who had been fired in various satellite campuses because of their union militancy; 2) they tried to eliminate the unequal work situation in the satellites with one contract, which would

also be a legal document ending the innumerable irregularities in hiring, promoting, and the administration of fringe benefits; 3) the union will not interfere in academic matters. Professors and researchers of each satellite campus will form their own democratic bodies, which will decide, without any interference of either the union or the university authorities, the orientation of academic programs; 4) the demands of the STUNAM encountered opposition because its democratic principles put in danger the control of some of the cliques in the university bureaucracy. The union understood that the problems of the university will not be solved by a few, but by democratic organizations only; 5) even though the suspension of classes affected students (not to mention foreign researchers who found all libraries and archives connected with the UNAM closed for the duration of the strike and its aftermath), better work conditions will result in improved teaching and easier and faster access to research libraries. With the existence of a consolidated union, labor conflicts at the UNAM would be reduced. Simultaneously, the STUNAM had served to help unite and organize the student movement (Field Notes, June 20, 1977). Many meetings had been held with student groups to promote the formation of committees in support of the strike, and the students responded with great enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, university authorities and those professors not affiliated with the STUNAM had organized classes in areas close to University City. Soberón declared in a press conference that the university will not pay the salaries of those who did not work and that the strikers were defying both the university and the government, which was certainly true. Despite the debates over the inclusion of the Communist Party and other "opposi-

tion" parties into the electoral process, the communists were again made the scapegoat behind the university disturbances (El Sol de México, June 21, 1977), which caused CP leaders to proceed with extreme caution so as not to spoil their chances of being coopted.

Soberón, when asked if he would request the intervention of the Secretaría de Gobernación, answered that he preferred to resolve university problems within University City and with university procedures. However, he added that he would ask for the application of more drastic measures if the Mexican people were to demand them. All that remained to be done was to "prepare" the people via press and television to accept the official version and the "application of more drastic measures," which the government had already decided on the moment the strike was declared illegal. For the authorities it was just a matter of time to find the "appropriate psychological" moment to introduce force.

Meanwhile, Diego Valadés, the UNAM's lawyer, requested the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration to declare the strike officially illegal. The Autonomous Associations of Academic Personnel, which had hastily been organized to oppose the STUNAM, expressed their willingness before Soberón to continue holding classes outside University City in public parks and other available places, claiming that 120,000 students participated.

On June 23, the STUNAM invited the university authorities in a newspaper display to a dialogue to resolve the conflict. The STUNAM also pointed out that the administration's petition to the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration to have the strike declared illegal implied the university's unwitting acceptance to solve the discord by constitutional law, the law

which the STUNAM had obeyed faithfully. The authorities, thus, had been victims of their own legal trick. The STUNAM, moreover, reported that students were not attending classes outside University City, since they refused to serve as scabs.

Meanwhile, the Federation of University Unions called for a strike in 25 universities in the country in support of the STUNAM. Further work stoppages and meetings to gain support were organized in different cities in the nation.

On June 24, Pérez Arreola together with a group of companions went to Soberón's new quarters in the National Institute of Nutrition to resume the broken down dialogue. Soberón and his secretary received them, but not before a bout with porras and goyas (another ultra-reactionary group). Soberón insisted on the termination of the strike before he was willing to discuss the STUNAM's petition. This, of course, was unacceptable to the members of the union.

On June 25 and 26, a Saturday and Sunday, several popular festivals took place to collect funds so that the STUNAM could finance its immense expenses. Young musicians sang resistance songs and guerrilla theaters caricatured the state, the charro leaders, and acted out the frustrations of the working class. This effective type of communication had first been introduced by the students in 1968, and in 1977 it again proved to be a forceful method in demystifying the onslaught of distorted reporting by government-obedient pens.

On June 27, the STUNAM suffered a major blow when the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration declared the strike illegal. The reason given was that the STUNAM was not registered with the Board. It should be



remembered, however, that the STUNAM duly registered with the Secretaría del Trabajo as specified in Article 365 of the Federal Labor Law. Notwithstanding, the STUNAM pointed out to the Board that if it was not registered there, the Board had no jurisdiction over the union and therefore could not declare the strike illegal. The solution of the conflict had to be found within the University.

That same day Soberón threatened the strikers that if they did not return to work by July 1, their contracts would be rescinded. He promised them that there would be no reprisals should they resume their duties, an empty promise as we have seen in all previous case studies.

On June 28, the situation took on more foreboding dimensions. Diego Valadés announced that if it should become necessary the University would call in the public forces to end the strike. Simultaneously, four television channels began to televise classes. Television classes were scheduled 13 hours per day, and people asked about the quality of the teaching on television responded that if education was that bad the University should remain closed. The use of television introduced a new weapon in the arsenal of those in power positions to fight the growing labor insurgency. For the first time in the history of Mexico commercial television served as scab to weaken a union movement, a fact which signals that to those who control this media the conflict became too grave.

Many UNAM professors criticized heavily the use of TELEVISA<sup>18</sup> to break the strike. Outstanding among them was Gastón García Cantú who emphasized that "the labor conquest of Mexico must not end with a television campaign....With the introduction of TV the university has pushed the panic button....TV is a very dangerous element since it is being used

to make the workers appear evil and to repudiate unionism." Leopoldo Zea, professor of Latin American philosophy, stated that the use of TV is only a partial instrument of teaching since it lacked the communication between student and teacher and the result will be a mutilation of content. The psychologist, Armando Barriquete, declared that "about the university conflict we hear information in only one sense: that is, in the UNAM exists a criminal movement which shakes the foundation of the nation." Julián Adem, who resigned from his post as director of the Centro de Ciencias de la Atmósfera, expressed the feelings of many Mexicans when he announced that "TV has been used [in this conflict] to deceive the TV audience and has been turned into a farce by those who employ it" (Proceso, July 4, 1977:6-9).

The immediate results of the television classes, however, were to confuse the issues of the labor dispute, to divide the workers of the UNAM, since quite a few professors "took the chance to fulfill their obligation to society" (Excélsior, June 29, 1977) and lectured on television, and to prepare the public to accept the government's measures against the STUNAM.

On June 29, López Portillo gave a press conference in which he explained that the University found itself in a transitory situation, insofar as it will have to be recreated from the liberal individualist to the university of the masses. He continued his address stating that the masses by their own nature tend to organize. He also acknowledged that in the new University the protagonists will not be the isolated individuals, but their own mass organizations. Concerning the actual STUNAM conflict he had no suggestions as to how to tackle it. Moreover, his statements were so vague and ambiguous that they could have been -- and actually were --

interpreted in many ways. For example, thinking of Cárdenas, he may have wanted to imply that professors and researchers, administrative employees, and manual workers ought to have their own "mass" organization, in the same way Cárdenas had organized separately the peasant sector, the urban workers and the public employees. However, he also may have wanted to imply that there ought to be just one mass organization in the University, namely the STUNAM. Pérez Arreola took up the second interpretation seeing in the President's declaration "the most dear rights of the workers which are collective contracts and strike," whereas Soberón analyzed the message to mean the preservation of the concept "university community" and the maintenance of an institution of high culture which teaches, investigates, and disseminates that culture. In other words, the double-talk of the President had already serious repercussions in the minds of those involved in the dispute, reinforcing the diametrically opposed positions of both contenders, whereas most "ordinary" people asked in the streets and on busses about López Portillo's statements concerning the University cynically remarked: "Who knows what he means!"

In the evening of the same day another massive demonstration took place in Mexico City. A conservative estimate figures that 60,000 persons attended; the STUNAM assured that 100,000 people participated in the march, and television diminished attendance to about 5,000 to 7,000 marchers.

In the meantime the authorities had also cut off water supply and electricity to the UNAM, which caused many irreversible damages in interrupted experiments and the death of 10,000 animals used for research purposes. Even though the strikers were blamed, STUNAM spokespersons insisted that their members were not responsible for the damages since

before the strike started they had solicited authorization from the Rectoría for the research personnel to continue its work. Without water and electricity this, however, was not possible.

On July 1 the general director of personnel at the UNAM, José Romo Díaz, announced in an advertisement in all newspapers that 500 positions were available at the institution and that interested and qualified individuals were invited to apply. In addition, the administrative secretary of the UNAM declared that at 8.00 p.m. all those who had not resumed their normal jobs will have their contracts rescinded (El Día, July 2, 1977).

On July 2 union leaders in the universities of the states of Veracruz, Jalisco, Puebla, Sonora, Durango and Oaxaca declared work stoppages in solidarity with the STUNAM. Moreover, in many cities demonstrations and meetings took place to support the strikers in the capital. Despite the demonstrations of support and the numerical strength of the strikers and supporters, the newspapers continued to write about a minority of trouble-makers whose "total failure was imminent" (Excelsior, El Universal, El Sol de México, July 4, 1977) since their demands were not only inadmissible but also not negotiable.

In the meantime various acts of sabotage had occurred at the UNAM and both the spokespersons of the STUNAM and the lawyer of the institution accused each other before the Procuraduría General de la República of having committed these offenses.

On July 6 the University made true one of its threats: it rescinded the work contracts of 37 members of the executive committee of the STUNAM. The charges were unjustified withdrawal of assistance, intentional damages,

negligence, and illegal suspension of work.

At the same time 12,000 applicants responded to the advertisements regarding "vacant" positions in the University, a reflection of the high unemployment rate in Mexico. Most applicants were only 20 to 24 years old.

To confuse things more and make matters worse for the STUNAM, a bulletin had been circulated to the press by the Dirección de Información of the UNAM signed by Alvaro Lechuga Wences, a member of the executive committee of the new union. In the bulletin the accusation was made that the university workers had been influenced by "foreign forces" (Excélsior, July 7, 1977). Since many employees were about to lose their jobs, Lechuga exhorted them to withdraw their sympathy from these foreign influences. He intimated that the strike had been carried on the shoulders of the administrative personnel and that true internal union democracy did not exist, and he proceeded to declare himself the only person to negotiate with the rector and the University Council. As a final touch he added that the rank and file did not wish to continue within a movement which was destroying the organization, and he qualified the strike as opportunistic and dangerous.

This statement came at a time when the STUNAM was losing ground since about 600 individuals had returned to work. It divided leadership when unity and strength were desperately needed. At a later date Lechuga was purged from the STUNAM, even though he declared in a press release that he had not given this bulletin to the press and that he had never compromised himself with the authorities. He insisted that the STUNAM defended the interests of the rank and file and that the union members made the decision

to go on strike. He furthermore denied that he had ever said that the tendency of the majority of the STUNAM was anti-democratic. On the contrary, he asserted, the workers of the STUNAM, above all, had contributed to the construction of the union (La Prensa, July 10, 1977:28). Lechuga's innocence or guilt was never proven. Notwithstanding, he was expelled from the STUNAM.

During the same day another huge demonstration of about 100,000 took place in Mexico City in which the usual sympathizers participated "accompanied" by riot trucks, a regiment of cavalry, and police swinging their clubs. In contrast to previous meetings, however, seven members of the STUNAM's executive committee had been kidnapped by secret police at the end of the demonstration. All seven belonged to the academic personnel.

#### Repression

On Thursday, July 7, 1977, Mexico City residents held their breath in horror when they learned from radio broadcasts that at 5.00 a.m. 12,000 uniformed police and an undetermined number of secret agents in civilian clothing identifying themselves with bracelets on their left arms, had surrounded University City and had apprehended 531 sleeping strikers. According to General Enrique Corona Morales, head of the Dirección de Policía y Tránsito, 330 vehicles were used including anti-riot tanks, patrol cars and ambulances. Two helicopters circled the sleepy university during the take-over.

Five public notaries testified that the police were without fire arms; however, newspaper and magazine photographs showed police carrying

high powered rifles, hand grenades, pistols and machine guns. Moreover, during a "leisurely stroll" towards the entrance of University City on Avenida Universidad on July 7, this writer saw the "unarmed" police carrying the above mentioned repressive hardware plus riot clubs, shields, and protective helmets.

During the take-over all vehicles which the police encountered on the campus were either destroyed, damaged or towed away. More than 70 people had been beaten by the police and ended up being treated in Balbuena hospital. The arrested persons were brought to Balbuena prison.

The police intervention came after a written request by the Procurador General, Oscar Flores, to the mayor of the city, Carlos Hank González. The official justification for the police occupation was that during the dislodgement 300 to 500 Molotov bombs, an undisclosed number of firearms, and subversive literature had been found on the campus. No reason was given why police were called in to violate university autonomy before it was known that "arms" had been stacked away on the campus. Moreover, no newspaper or magazine, official or unofficial, carried photographs of the allegedly found Molotov bombs or firearms leaving the spectator with the thought that the stories were made up. As to subversive literature, no attempts had been made to define exactly what it consisted of.

At 10:30 in the morning the police returned the institution to the rector, who solemnly declared: "The University had abided strictly by the Law. We live in a regime of Law and the University is not outside of national jurisdiction" (Excélsior, July 7, 1977). By implication, then, the strike was lawful because, according to Soberón's statement, the University's employees fell under the national law which allows workers to

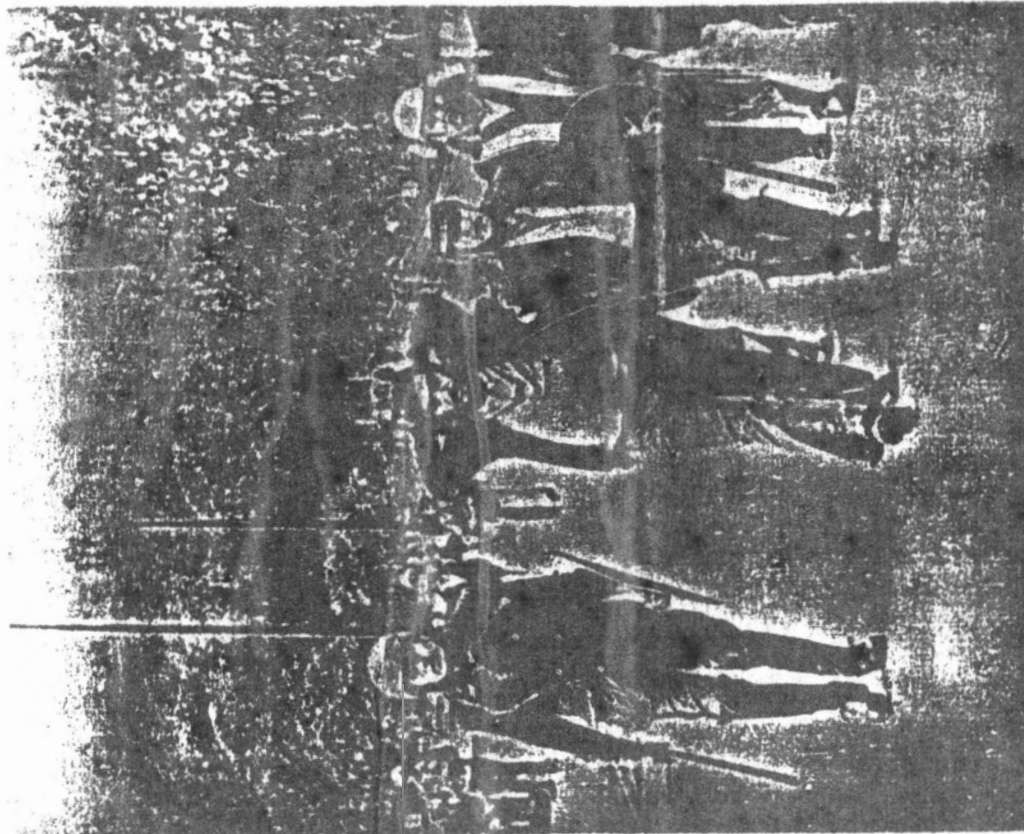
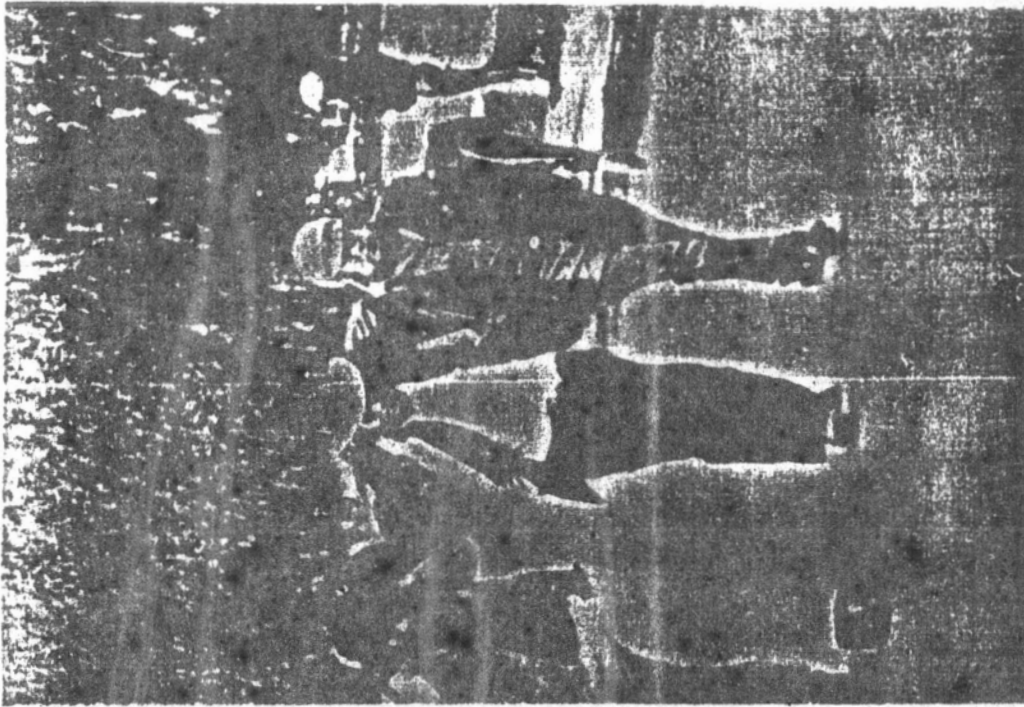
form a union and to go on strike should negotiations fail. Ironically, however, Soberón did not see it that way.

Evaristo Pérez Arreola had escaped arrest and showed up at the Xochimilco campus of the Metropolitan Autonomous University where he discussed with 2,000 teachers and employees the turn of events and what to do now. At the same time police occupied other places, including the locals of the STEUNAM and the SPAUNAM, which were ransacked and all documentation and office equipment was stolen.

In Mexico City, in the meantime, people who previously had not committed themselves to comment on either the STUNAM or the attitudes of the university authorities, were quite shocked by the renewed employment of public force. Almost everybody asked about the police occupation of University City, was against it and added with alarm: "Will this be another 1968?" The National Defence secretary, however, reassured Mexicans that today's conditions were different from those in 1968. "While the Law has been applied with sufficient strength, the same events will not be happening this time" (El Día, July 8, 1977). He intimated, however, that the Army was "ready" to intervene in case the internal peace and stability be threatened. López Portillo evaded reporters' questions stating only: "We will comment at an opportune time" (Excélsior, July 8, 1977).

The police intervention was immediately applauded by Fidel Velázquez, the CTM, the PRI, private initiative and members of the loyal opposition parties, the Party of National Action, the Popular Socialist Party and the Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution. The Communist Party considered the action as a violation of university autonomy and condemned it as being





Arrested STUNAM strikers, 1977

against the rights of the working class. It also insisted that the government was endangering the program of political reforms with this new wave of repression. Heberto Castillo, veteran of 1968 and president of the Mexican Workers' Party, declared that the public forces in the UNAM were acting against the Constitution since they repressed precisely those Mexicans who fought for their sacred rights written down in Article 123.

But if the government and the University authorities thought they had gained the upper hand again, they were quite wrong. The same day various unions, political parties and students demonstrated their support for the STUNAM. Students and teachers of the IPN announced their intention to initiate an indefinite work stoppage. The union of the workers of the Metropolitan Autonomous University offered its places and its unconditional support to the STUNAM's cause, and the Federation of University Unions of the Mexican Republic ratified its decision to call a national strike for 24 hours and after that another one lasting indefinitely.

Surprisingly, police also assaulted the office of the Centro Libre de Experimentación Teatral y Artística (CLETA, Free Centre of Theatrical and Artistic Experimentation) and took with them all office materials, such as typewriters, mimeographs, etc., and documents. Even the Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social (CENCOS, National Centre of Social Communication), a group of progressive Catholics, was not spared. At CENCOS five persons were arrested including two reporters from Proceso, a magazine critical of the government, which had been established by Julio Scherer García, one of the members of Excélsior who had been purged by Echeverría because of the paper's critical attitude towards that government. At CENCOS as well, police carried off documents, typewriters, a small offset printing machine,

two mimeographs, a photocopier and other office materials. Asked by one of the Proceso reporters why they sacked CENCOS, one policeman answered that they had obeyed superior orders and added: "It's because here is a lot of subversive propaganda" (Proceso, July 11, 1977:24). Simultaneously, the police also raided the offices of the Centro de Asistencia a Refugiados Latinoamericanos (CARLA, Centre of Assistance to Latin American Refugees) connected to the offices of the United Nations' Human Rights Commission; the Coordinating Centre of Ecumenical Projects; the Latin American Commission of Christian Education and the Program of Education and Family Planning, the last one connected to the World Council of Churches. With the attack on these organizations the conflict took on international proportions, and all above groups sent protest telegrams to López Portillo, to the secretary of the Interior, Jesús Reyes Heróles, and to the head of the Department of the Federal District, requesting the liberation of the detained persons and the return of documentation so tediously collected during many years of systematic work. The excesses against these organizations did a lot to damage the already tarnished reputation of the government and probably influenced López Portillo's decisions concerning the resolution of the University conflict.

Meanwhile, agents of the Federal Police searched for the leaders of the STUNAM, Nicolás Olivos Cuéllar and Evaristo Pérez Arreola, who had escaped the assault. Those already arrested faced jail sentences from two to twenty years for criminal activities and sabotage.

A one-page advertisement to the Universitarios signed by Soberón appeared in all newspapers on July 8. In it he defended the use of the granaderos to "restore order" blaming it all on the "intransigency" and

"arbitrariness" of a few individuals at the head of the STUNAM. He iterated that "we acted within the law according to our historical tradition" and tried to make Public Opinion understand that the agreements made with the SPAUNAM and STEUNAM were perfectly satisfactory. He still denied that the STUNAM was a rank and file movement and insisted that "a political entity," namely the Communist Party, had imposed its will on the STUNAM to gain a base from which to operate and to subvert the entire nation. Soberón had connections with the ultra-conservative Monterrey Group, and it appears that this strong lobby pressured the government to prevent the registration of the Communist Party with the Federal Electoral Commission (Punto Crítico, July 30, 1977:12).

At the same time the National Executive Committee of the PRI together with the Congreso del Trabajo and 33 other well integrated confederations and unions applauded the administration's use of the "coercive power of the state" to impede the prolongation of the "illegal" strike in a one-page "Manifesto to the Nation." Proudly, the conglomeration pointed out: "At this occasion the Law has triumphed. But we must maintain our guard, since we can assume that the instigators of such battles against social normality will persist in their endeavours" (El Día, July 9, 1977).

The same day 24 universities all over the nation suspended work for 24 hours to protest the police occupation of the National University, to demand the release of the arrested strikers and to demonstrate their support for the STUNAM. Moreover, the cherished, manipulated and amorphous "Public Opinion" now turned against the government, the University authorities and the use of the police. René Avilés Fabila asked in the Diario de México (July 8, 1977): "Is it because there is no other way in Mexico?"

Scathingly he added: "It is not the legality of the strike that is at stake, neither is it Soberón's attitude; it is the possibility of the development of an independent, combative, critical union movement, that is an opposition force to the State in spite of all the talk about political reform. ...[The occupation] is a pain, an immense tragedy, which will see the country immersed in a repressive wave just when one thought these times were part of history." Another commentator, Javier López Moreno, wrote in El Día (July 9, 1977): "The repression instills fear, but it never will be able to instill respect....What occurred on July 7 in the University is evidence that our crisis is deeper than we are disposed to accept. It is a pity that ... the police cannot do away with all the scandals which happen in the country. The scandal of misery, for example."

Meanwhile, Pérez Arreola unexpectedly showed up at a meeting in the Red Place of the Professional University of Zacatenco surrounded and protected by a ring of students. He swore that the police occupation of the UNAM did not mean the end of the independent union movement, and he began to make much stronger statements in regard to his ideas for Mexico's future. "We will construct the country of the proletariat....With the working class movement we will make the socialist revolution. ... to arrive at socialism we will have to organize the people." The secretary of the Federation of University Unions spoke about the necessity of a unified national movement and the Student Committee initiated the discussion about the ouster of Soberón.

Because of the immense public pressure the government decided to free about 500 of the 531 persons detained. The remaining individuals were put at the disposition of the Procuraduría General of the Republic. Among

them were six leaders of the STUNAM Eliézer Morales Aragón, Pablo Pascual Moncayo, Erwin Stephan Otto, Jorge del Valle Cervantes, Rosalio Wences Reza, and José Woldenberg, who were waiting to be judged for the "crime of sabotage." Although, apparently, nobody was killed during the police intervention, 33 individuals could not be traced (El Día, July 9, 1977).

On July 10, the conflict was officially declared terminated. The STUNAM had signed an agreement with the University authorities exhibiting the following salient features:

1. Recognition of the STUNAM and subrogation of all rights of the former unions (SPAUNAM and STEUNAM);
2. payment of 26 percent of lost wages;
3. the rescissions of the contracts of union members to be ineffective;
4. reinstatement of those persons fired before the strike began;
5. no reprisals to be taken against the union.

In addition, the STUNAM signed a second agreement with the Secretariat of the Interior stating the following points:

- I. that the police will be immediately withdrawn from University City;
- II. that the police persecution of members of the STUNAM cease;
- III. that the police also withdraw from the union locals.

The Secretary of the Interior, Jesús Reyes Heróles, signed this agreement under the condition that the STUNAM end the strike. At the same time the six imprisoned leaders were set free, as well. However, each of them was fined 10,000 pesos, which the STUNAM paid.

On July 11, the police withdrew from the university apparently without any incidents. The UNAM, however, could not yet be opened for usual activities since electricity and water had not been restored. Normal life returned to University City on July 18. Thus, within only one month, the



LA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA,  
ACADEMICA, LIBRE Y  
COMPROMETIDA CON MEXICO  
HA SIDO PRESERVADA  
UNA VEZ MAS...

THE AUTONOMOUS, ACADEMIC AND FREE UNIVERSITY,  
COMMITTED TO MEXICO, HAS BEEN PRESERVED ONE  
MORE TIME ...

Leaflet distributed by the STUNAM depicting  
Guillermo Soberon.

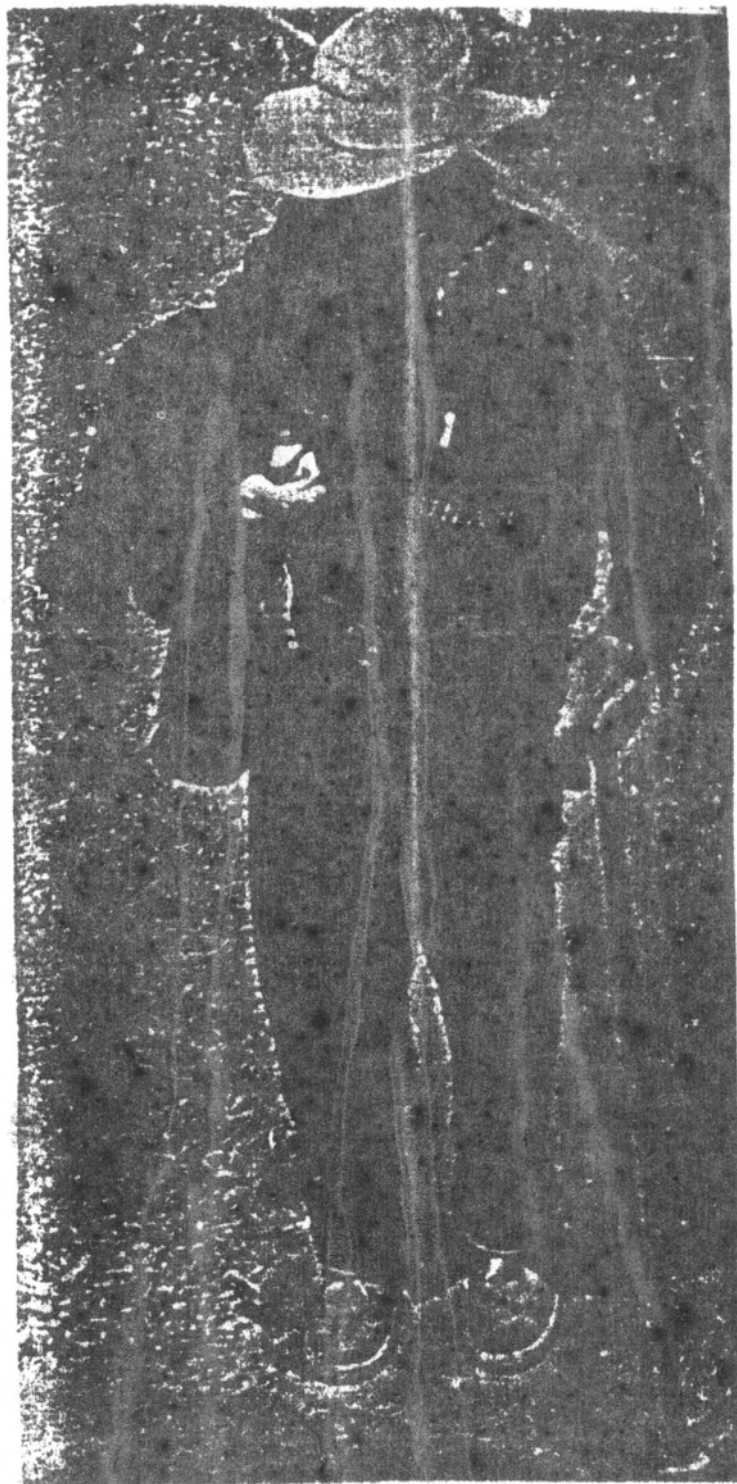
strike was broken, some concessions had been granted, leadership was divided and membership confused.

#### The Aftermath

After the police had retired from University City on July 12 the UNAM was found in an indescribable mess. The destruction touched everything from broken windows to smashed laboratory equipment. During the insane destruction scientific works of great importance and expensive equipment for research disappeared. Hundreds of doors had been destroyed, writing desks damaged, telephone cables pulled out, papers, documents and books lay scattered on the ground, bookshelves were wrecked and curtains had simply disappeared. But above all, mountains of human excrement were found on chairs, on papers, on books, on carpets, on walls, practically everywhere. Even after a week of cleaning up the stench of human excrement and urine had not been erased. As if this defacement of the UNAM had not been enough, slogans, such as "Long live fascism in Mexico!" had been written on the walls. The University authorities did not hesitate to blame the strikers for the disfigurement, and the STUNAM pointed to the police as the perpetrators of such atrocious acts. Keeping in mind, however, the fact that maintenance workers had keys to all offices, lecture rooms and laboratories, it strikes one as absurd to think that they would have wanted to cause this extreme damage to their University, particularly since they were the ones who had to clean up the disaster area. The onus for those vile actions must fall on the police. Later, the government began investigations into who was responsible for the outrages committed at the UNAM.



Talks, however, dragged on, and as far as I know neither the strikers nor the police had ever been charged. The significance of this non-commitment to find the guilty party points to the fact that the striking workers could not have caused the damages. With the reputation of the government and the police already quite stained, it is my guess that López Portillo intended to let the issue peter out until people would most mercifully forget it. However, the strategy did not work. Five thousand students (many from the Science Faculties, who had been uncommitted to the STUNAM, but had now become quite angry because of the senseless destruction of their laboratory equipment), professors, and employees marched from the Monumento Obregón to the Rectoría in pouring rain to demand the resignation of Soberón. With clenched fists in the air they shouted: "Gorillas to the zoo" -- "The UNAM is not a prison, get out sergeant Soberón," and most disrespectfully "Soberón, a la chingada" ("Fuck off, Soberón"). The students had shown great maturity and political clarity during the duration of the conflict. Repeatedly they had denounced Soberón as the mouthpiece of the Monterrey Group and the use of the granaderos by the government. They had pledged their solidarity with the STUNAM and showed great courage during their own demonstrations, never letting themselves be provoked by the university's porras and other ever present paramilitary provocateurs. Student support grew rapidly during the strike from 10 affiliated schools of higher learning to 37. Even though students limited their political activities to the protection and the support of the STUNAM and the avoidance of charrification of the new union, the strike and subsequent repression politicized many of them and increased their militancy.



Proceso

CHAPTER V: BALANCE OF THE CONTROVERSY

The most surprising aspect of the conflict was that the University authorities finally sat down and made a pact with the STUNAM granting the union the collective contract as well as six of their demands without, however, including a raise in wages of 20 percent. The authorities also agreed to a self-serve university store (tienda), which was to open in November 1977. Superficially seen, it appears that the strike was in vain, since most of the STUNAM's demands were met. But, why then did the University not sign the collective contract and concede the demands of the merging STEUNAM and SPAUNAM before June 20, 1977? The answer lies in the Federal Government's intention to crush the independent union movement, but not union organization as long as it remained under official control. The strategy of both, government and Soberón, in that respect was quite clear. To save the authoritarian corporate structure of Mexican dependent capitalism independence in any form could not be tolerated since it would seriously crack the makeup of Mexican institutions and would have to lead to a reformulation of the existing order in one way or another. During his first seven months in office López Portillo introduced not only a program of austerity with the "help" of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but also implemented policies of counter-insurgency to eliminate the threat of increasing labor unrest. The tactics he used in that respect were the following:

- 1) Attrition: wearing out the protesters until their strike fund ran out and they had to return to work. Since this method failed to get all workers back on their jobs they were threatened with:

- 2) Loss of employment: the strikers' positions were offered to anybody qualified;
- 3) Legalism: the use of legalistic maneuvers to confuse the issues and to divide leadership and the rank and file movement;
- 4) Repression: to break the independent spirit;
- 5) Concessions: to grant some of the demands under the disguise of populist rhetoric and in the name of the "national well being," and to give the impression that the government was not anti-union per se, only anti-unofficial unionism.

The above policies had not only been applied to the STUNAM, but had also been used in disputes in the universities of Oaxaca, Zacatecas, Guerrero, Nayarit, the IPN, the Normal, and the Colegios de Ciencias y Humanidades (Punto Crítico, July 30, 1977:3). Public forces had interfered in these universities to prevent attempts at democratization by students and faculty. Because of the rampant discontent in the universities the government aimed to bring about a national juridical order to regulate labor relations between university personnel and its employer, the state. So far the universities had not been included in any institutionalized organizations and thus escaped bureaucratic control. But with the student body swelling from 80,000 in 1968 to 250,000 in 1977 at the UNAM alone, the universities most certainly will need a code regulating their internal affairs. But according to the STUNAM it was not to be Soberón's infamous Section "C."

The position of the PRI with regard to the STUNAM was unambiguous from the beginning. The union committed a crime against the University when it withdrew its services and thus opened itself to the full force of

the law. The National Executive Committee of the PRI considered the introduction of the police into the conflict correct since it ended an "illegal" strike. The official party and the CTM were the legal representatives of any labor union or federation and theirs alone was the sacred obligation to improve the workers' living standards. Independence from these bodies was an outrage, which in the name of the Mexican Revolution was out of the question.

Soberón's strategies coincided with the approach followed by López Portillo. The rector's systematic political campaign against the STUNAM included the refusal for three months to negotiate with the union's executive committee, thus practically forcing the strike. Through legalistic maneuvers he prolonged it to wear out the strikers and to deplete the strike fund. The television campaigns against the union and the distorted information emanating from the press divided the STUNAM internally and sowed distrust everywhere. Repression followed when the rector and the government felt that public opinion had been prepared sufficiently and when the STUNAM tried to iron out internal discord (Lechuga affair, threats of loss of jobs). However, Mexicans had been betrayed and confused by their politicians for decades. They had developed quite a cynical attitude towards the legitimacy of Mexico's political system, and were more prepared to listen to the highly politicized professionals of the UNAM than to their representatives in the National Palace.

Concerning the "illegality" of the STUNAM strike there is no doubt that the union acted within the legal framework of the 1917 Constitution and the Federal Labor Law. However, Soberón's maneuvers violated not only national legislation but also the statutes of the University. He "vio-

lated the Organic Law of the University since he acted without consulting the University Council; he violated the constitutional guarantees of those whom he fired because they did not manifest the same opinion as he did with regard to the conflict; he violated the University Statutes when he offered the strikers' positions to new personnel; he violated the same Statutes when he exercised pressure and coercion over the universitarios and over other university authorities" (Proceso, July 11, 1977:31).

Soberón's efforts were geared towards a more vertical integration of university structures allowing him to impose trustees over instructors and to transform the Rectoría into a powerful apparatus of political control sidestepping the University Council.

Some questions arise with regard to the STUNAM such as: Why did the movement suffer such a great setback in spite of the thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets in support of the syndicate? Why was the STUNAM not capable of convincing the government and the rector that they had not broken the nation's laws with their strike?

Part of the answer to these questions lies in the fact that the STUNAM had not signed up the majority of the academic personnel. Because of their social, economic, cultural and ideological heterogeneity this task had grown extremely problematic. Many of the academics' main income was not provided by the UNAM since their principal occupations ranged from "technicians and employees to true burgueses, entrepreneurs and private and public functionaries, who carried on teaching or research only on a part time basis" (Estrategia, May-June, 1977:42). In addition, this sector founded the Autonomous Associations of the Academic Personnel, which were practically embryonic charro organizations. The majority of

STUNAM members had been recruited from the STEUNAM, and the SPAUNAM represented only a minority. The STUNAM did not pay sufficient attention to the lack of membership, since the charro associations, still in formation, were not clearly visible. Moreover, because of the enormous support the STUNAM received in public demonstrations from students, other independent unions and political parties, it neglected to prepare its rank and file members for the political struggle that lay ahead. Most important, before calling the strike the new union should have had signed up a majority of faculty, administrative employees and maintenance workers. Ten thousand members were affiliated with the STUNAM at a time when the University employed about 30,000 individuals in the various categories. Thus, the STUNAM went onto the battlefield with an excess of confidence concerning its strength and an underestimation of possible reaction from private enterprise and the government. Strikers repeatedly told me that the government would not dare to send in the troops since the strike took place within the provisions of the Constitution. When I confronted them with the fact that the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration had declared the strike illegal and I expressed fear that the movement would be repressed, they assured me that this was just a misunderstanding which would be cleared up in due time. Moreover, chained by an incorrect interpretation of the régime's policies, the STUNAM believed that Soberón alone was responsible for delaying tactics and the police occupation of University City. The STUNAM did not make the connection that the rector's activities were linked to López Portillo's design to combat independent unionism. Allowances should also be made for the fact that at the time the new President's policies towards independent movements were not quite clear. The STUNAM's response, therefore, may be

interpreted in the light of Echeverría's guidelines, which encouraged democratization and the removal of corrupt leadership as long as this was done within the status quo. The STUNAM wrongly assumed that López Portillo would continue on the same path.

In spite of these errors and its limited political perception the STUNAM opened another important chapter in the fight for independence and autonomy from state control, since it mobilized highly politicized individuals from middle class backgrounds on a national level. Its pressure for democratization and parity on mixed commissions could not be accepted since it would have shaken the foundations the Mexican state was built on.

Julián Adem,<sup>19</sup> director of the Centro de Ciencias de la Atmósfera, stated in an interview with Rodolfo Guzmán of Proceso that at the time when the STEUNAM and later the SPAUNAM were founded, the authorities refused as well to discuss matters with the unions. Their strikes were also declared illegal. Nevertheless, at one point a dialogue was resumed, both unions were recognized and were granted their collective contracts. No police intervention was necessary. Adem insisted that police repression of the STUNAM also could have been avoided had it not been for Soberón, who proved himself a powerful Rector tolerating no opposition. During a meeting on June 27, 1977 of the directors of the various preparatory schools, faculties, institutes and centers of research to discuss the STUNAM strike with Soberón, Adem witnessed that

the majority of the directors supported Soberón through their silence. Nothing was discussed. There was no dialogue during these meetings. The rector limited himself to inform the directors of the decisions already taken and actions already planned. The directors limited themselves to listening (Proceso, July 25, 1977:6).



Two days later, on June 29, Julian Adem resigned from his position because "I supported my companions who fought for a cause I considered just" (op.cit.). The same day he joined the STUNAM with only one proposition: "To fight so that the vertical structure of government at the UNAM will change into a democratic one, in which the whole community will be consulted, that is workers, teachers, students, researchers, administrative personnel, and not only those who govern" (op.cit.).

The damage that Soberón caused the UNAM with his dictatorial attitude remained irreparable since many valuable scientists and important researchers and professors, whom the UNAM had trained, were either fired or resigned voluntarily, thus depriving the University of their services. However, Soberón's actions should not only be interpreted within the microcosm of the UNAM, but they also have to be seen as a reflection of the decisions taken at the national level of which the University is but a smaller part. Moreover, as a PRI supporter, Soberón intended to climb to higher stations within the official party apparatus, and in that way complied with the policies coming down from the highest office, the presidency.

Evaristo Pérez Arreola, the secretary general of the STUNAM, emphasized that he and his companions signed the pact with the authorities because they were promised that the fired executive committee members and others would be reinstated and that no reprisals against STUNAM members would be carried out. He did not consider the union defeated, only the strike broken. He realized that the fight for the collective contract and the recognition of the STUNAM was not simply a matter of convincing Soberón of the rightfulness of their demands, but that "private initiative through

the Monterrey Group and the government through police intervention" (Punto Crítico, July 1977:12) actually had determined the outcome of the strike. Concerning the STUNAM, Pérez Arreola agreed that the most important task was to reconstruct the union, strengthen it, and gain a greater number of members. His most important concern was to avoid the union falling into the hands of official charro leaders. He insisted that in an extraordinary assembly, which would be called as soon as possible, the members of the STUNAM will decide on the future direction of the union. He stressed that the teachers of the preparatorias, who were not yet affiliated with the STUNAM, had to be part of it. Within two years of hard union work, he speculated, the STUNAM will have gained the majority of the University's employees and faculty and will, therefore, be in a better position to negotiate its demands.

Eliézer Morales Aragón, as well, did not think that the repression defeated the STUNAM. It just disorganized and disoriented its members for the moment. Morales Aragón felt that before June 20 the STUNAM was only a social project, whereas after the police intervention the struggle turned into a political issue of national proportions. However, for Morales Aragón and other STUNAM executives, the greatest obstacle to the strengthening of the STUNAM came from professors whose main activities lay outside teaching at the UNAM. Eighty-nine percent of faculty at the UNAM fell into that category. These academics were not interested in unionization (Proceso, July 18, 1977:22).

Arnaldo Córdova saw the University conflict in two dimensions: economic and political. Both manifested themselves more and more in the sharpening erosion of the established system of domination. To him it was

clear that economic correctives were not enough against the crisis. "In Mexico," he said, "political order is grounded in the control of the working masses. This control is the principal guaranty of the economic system against the devastating effects of the crisis. By its own nature it is a political order which cannot accept in any form a democratization or a liberation of the control over the working masses" (Punto Crítico, July 30, 1977:16). Concerning the errors of the STUNAM, Córdova explained that the union had overstepped the legal boundaries set by the state and that the conflict thus implied a permanent and open confrontation with the state. "The repression was the result of one failure on our part, a rapid definition of our union in its relations with the state" (op.cit.).

The Communist Party's role in the conflict generated great controversy. Even though López Portillo was about to include the PCM into the electoral system as an opposition party, the authorities declared the Communist Party solely responsible for the agitation among the workers. It was furthermore accused of setting up a stronghold in the University from which it would develop a national political program, organize a national general strike, and finally overthrow the present government. Concerning these accusations some members of the STUNAM had the following to say: Rosalio Wences Reza, who had been dragged out of his bed in his home on July 7 by the police and had been arrested for the "crime of sabotage," commented that within the STUNAM several union currents prevailed, of which the corriente roja (red current) was the strongest mainly among the administrators, but not among the academics. The PCM played an important role within the corriente roja. But the movement unfolded with the support of all currents. Even though half of the mem-

bers of the STUNAM's executive committee were also members of the PCM, this proportion was considerably reduced in the Strike Committee, which made all the decisions concerning the strike (Proceso, July 18, 1977:22-23).

To Eliézer Morales the scapegoating of the PCM was "a monstrous deformation" (op.cit.). He insisted that the STUNAM did not belong to any political party, since all ideological currents of the political spectrum -- except for the conservative elements -- had been present. It appeared ironical to him that the most important unions of the country and their central confederations had to be affiliated with one party -- the PRI -- as defined by statutory obligations. Eliézer Morales condemned the authorities for surmising that the members of the STUNAM were incapable of assuming responsibility for the union and for organizing a strike without the help of a party. But then, one should add, to the government and the University authorities the working masses, including the intellectuals of the universities, were morally, culturally and intellectually "underdeveloped" and needed the tutelage and guidance of an experienced paternalistic authority figure. Since the PCM was the strongest and most feared -- although for no good reason, since it operates well within the constitutional framework -- unregistered opposition party, the PRI automatically assumed that it could have been only the PCM which led the "impressionable," "inexperienced" universitarios to rebel against the state. Why the PRI and the President did not realize that within the STUNAM highly politicized individuals operated, who were familiar with the country's history, the reasons for the Mexican Revolution, the genesis of the new state and the mechanisms of cooptation and repression of dissidents and the control of the masses, may be explained in terms of the

government's incapability to see that the populist methods of dealing with the masses had disappeared with the end of Cárdenas' six-year period. The program of industrialization neglected the needs of the producing masses (both of working class and middle class backgrounds), whose living standard progressively had been eroded through inflation, and whose constitutional rights of political participation were lost through domination and control by the state and its affiliated organizations. The STUNAM's goal was to recapture these constitutional rights of political participation within an independent autonomous framework. Nowhere in its text does the Constitution of 1917 say that the organizations of the peasants, workers, or state employees have to be integrated into confederations controlled by the state. The PCM, as well, did not deviate from the constitutional frame of reference. Moreover, it desperately desired to be registered with the Federal Electoral Commission; therefore, it admonished its members during the STUNAM strike not to create tidal waves. It made certain that the President, the PRI, and other hallowed state institutions were not directly attacked. The PCM did not want to spoil its chances of being coopted, that is to say, legally registered. Therefore, Soberón alone was made responsible for preventing discussion, questioning the legality of the strike, rescinding work contracts, offering the strikers' positions to unemployed Mexicans, and unilaterally calling in the granaderos. While all this is certainly true, it cannot be overlooked that Soberón acted in collusion with the government and private initiative, as represented by the Monterrey Group. López Portillo was the only person who could have ordered the police to occupy University City, thus the onus for the repression falls on him alone. It would also be interesting to speculate whether the six

leaders of the STUNAM, who had been arrested but then released after payment of 60,000 pesos, had received cooptative offers and had refused. No mention of this aspect had appeared in either newspapers or verbal communications. All six were highly esteemed professors of the UNAM and specialists in their respective fields of investigation. After release from prison, all six dedicated themselves to the restructuring and rebuilding of the STUNAM.

In contrast with other union movements for independence the STUNAM conflict was dealt with swiftly. The principal leaders had been imprisoned for only about one week, and the new union was recognized under the provision that it sign up a majority of the academic personnel. The majority of STUNAM members had been drawn from the former STEUNAM. This rapidity of the government's action can partly be explained by the STUNAM's surprising capability to muster national solidarity with other colleges and universities, posing the threat of mass discontent, which the régime felt it had to subdue fast. However, López Portillo, private initiative, and the UNAM's rector severely misjudged the political awareness of the Mexican people. Neither TELEVISA nor newspaper slander campaigns did very much to convince Mexicans, whom I randomly talked with, that the STUNAM was wrong. Gaspar Elizondo satirically said that Mexicans consider politicians a necessary evil in whose selection and removal they have nothing to say. Mexicans accept politicians like the rain, the heat, the cold, the good and bad weather, as facts of life about which they can do nothing. They know they do not elect their politicians, and neither do they believe that the politicians serve them (Proceso, July 4, 1977:3). The movements for democratization and independence from the government structures have struck a

chord in the hearts of many Mexicans. They expressed their solidarity with the students in 1968, the STUNAM and other similar movements, not only because of the truths of the statements made, or because of the justice of the demands voiced, but mainly because Mexicans felt deep inside that these movements may be a way out of the present misery and may open up a better life for themselves and their children. Mexicans are thoroughly disillusioned with their country's political processes and cynicism concerning their political leadership abounds.

Thus the rapidity with which the authorities ended the conflict (the strike lasted only one month) can be ascribed to the fears of the governing class that the unrest would not only spread to other universities across the country, but would also receive the support of many Mexicans who searched for alternatives to the present system.

Another factor, which must have compelled López Portillo to terminate the controversy and to act with great leniency towards the STUNAM's leaders, was the senseless ransacking of CENCOS, CECOPE, CELADEC, and CARLA, all institutions connected with international organizations. These raids had international repercussions causing the "High Commissioner for the Refugees of the United Nations, the Human Rights Commission in London, the Committee for Integridad Física of political prisoners in Mexico, the Venezuelan Commission of Human Rights, the International Front for Human Rights, ... and the International Seminary for the Formation of Non-violent Action" (Proceso, August 1, 1977:21) to send protest messages to the President. No new President could possibly afford his first seven months in power to be stained by such stupid actions as the assault on the above institutions, the stealing of office material and equipment, and the appro-

priation of carefully compiled documents, particularly at a time when U.S. President Carter was putting so much emphasis on the respect for human rights, not to speak of the fact that the police action at CENCOS, etc. was unconstitutional.

Perhaps one major incongruency which confounded both the régime and the University authorities was that in the past those individuals who chose a university career came from the upper middle and upper classes. These classes had not been integrated into the corporative structure of the state mainly because they held the same ideological convictions as the régime. From the pool of young graduates the higher echelons of the political bureaucracy and the technocratic corporations recruited their new members. Thus, the state did not deem it necessary to control the nation's universities. However, 1968 shattered the myth of the elitist ivory tower, even though most students then still belonged to the middle and upper classes. Only 2.85 percent came from the peasantry and 14.66 percent from the working class (Ramírez, I, 1969:29). In 1977, according to statistics gathered by the UNAM, about half of the 250,000 students came from the working class and the peasantry, and as López Portillo so clearly recognized in his speech of June 29, there exists now the university of the masses. However, concerning the "university of the masses" Francisco Ortiz Mendoza, head of the parliamentary group of the Popular Socialist Party, declared the number of peasants' and workers' children studying at universities infinitesimally small and added that "scarcely 6 per cent come from those classes....The great majority of the student body is made up of the petty and grand bourgeoisie" (El Día, July 14, 1977). Notwithstanding, student discontent expressed itself in the support they mobilized



for the STUNAM. Most students know that the present system has nothing to offer them. López Portillo's austerity program contracts internal production reducing employment and subsequently the living standards of the lower and middle classes. Many small and medium-sized firms, as well as large corporations, lay off employees, thus decreasing the chances for graduating students to obtain positions for which they are qualified. How will these students, part-time (or taxi) professors and researchers, and administrative and maintenance personnel respond to their gradual or sometimes even fast downward "social mobility" now that their strike had been defeated?

If one were to believe Soberón, "there were neither victors nor victims" (El Día, July 11, 1977) after the repression. However, "non-existing victims" such as professors and students of the Faculty of Sciences, which had been particularly hard hit during the police occupation, drafted a petition and hoped to collect 100,000 signatures to present to the Junta de Gobierno so that Soberón could be relieved of his position. Moreover, students in the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature had gathered more than 2,000 signatures on a petition which demanded the discharge of two professors, who had openly maligned the STUNAM and had demonstrated "fascist" attitudes (Oposición, July 23, 1977:9, 12). Additionally, the students showed their dissension with professors, who had scabbed during the strike, by arriving in class, waiting for the professor to enter the classroom, and once he began to speak, they all stood up and walked out.

As for the STUNAM, its most immediate tasks were

- 1) to reorganize the union internally and consolidate it;
- 2) to strengthen the unity achieved during the strike;

- 3) to recruit more members, particularly of the academic sector;
- 4) to recuperate those union members who had sided with Lechuga and friends believing that unity among professors and administrative workers cannot be achieved because of irreconcilable class differences;
- 5) to avoid the imposition of charro leaders;
- 6) to insist that university personnel be included into section "A" of constitutional article 123 to avoid the resurrection of Soberón's infamous section "C."

Furthermore, the STUNAM will have to take into account external factors, such as the strength of the alliance of the University authorities with private initiative, which through TELEVISA has access to the whole population; the attitude of the government, which controls through Productora e Importadora de Papel (PIPSA, Paper Producer and Importer) the distribution of newsprint, thus being in a position to censor the content of published material;<sup>20</sup> and the position of the Federación de Sindicatos Universitarios (FSU, Federation of University Unions), which is caught up in a tangle of bureaucratic inefficiencies, thus being a stumbling block to the formation of a national university union.

In conclusion, some last words from the STUNAM, which in its leaflet "El STUNAM se mantiene firme y unido" (The STUNAM remains firm and united) said:

Our movement has neither failed nor has it concluded. Now, with all our compañeros free the work will continue. Enriched by the new experiences we maintain our demands. We are not alone in this struggle. We count with the enthusiastic solidarity of thousands of Mexicans who have understood that our reasons are just and that the effort we realize today will contribute to make this country a democratic country.

Towards the National Union of Workers of Higher Education!

For the Unity of the Workers!

United we shall overcome!

Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Universidad Nacional  
Autónoma de México

July 12, 1977

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

No se olvida

... en esta ciudad de todos exiliados,  
se volvió a la plaza donde J. fue capturado,  
donde G. lo fue tambien, donde N. y D.  
pudieron huir bajo las balas,  
donde muchos que jamás conocimos  
murieron en su lugar. ...

Don't forget

... in this city where all are exiled,  
one returns to the plaza where J. was  
captured  
and G. too, where N. and D.  
fled under the bullets,  
where many whom we never knew  
died in their place.

Héctor Manjarrez, Mexico, October 3, 1978

When comparing and contrasting the five Mexican movements towards independence from state control one surprising fact stands out: the state did not hesitate to crush by force workers' as well as middle class protests. Even though none of these movements developed outside the constitutional framework, all five of them utilized methods outside the institutional frame of reference supported by the state.

The railroad men's movement was practically the first to question one of the most pervasive mechanisms of institutional control of the Mexican political system: the control of the working class through a rigid and highly hierarchical bureaucracy. The repression of their strike unmasked the state's claim of being the "arbiter between the social classes" and even more the illusion that the state was the "defender of the working class." These claims had been the essential base on which the Mexican state had built its legitimacy. Repression of the railroad men also

unveiled the state's links with the dominant class since it refused to increase the tariffs for minerals exported by United States-owned companies.

Thus, 1959 burst asunder the "social pact" which Cárdenas had established between the state and the workers during his six-year presidency. In addition, between 1959 and 1968 power concentrated even more in the small circle of the state, and official intolerance was directed at anyone who refused to join the "revolutionary family." "The concentration of power of the governing class arrived at the extreme since not even the 'domesticated' opposition, the PAN and PPS, were conceded legitimate electoral triumphs. All spontaneous manifestations of social discontent not conducted within 'institutionalized' rules were condemned as illegal and suffered repression" (Guevara Niebla, 1978:15). The state's scorn was not directed at the economic petitions of the strikers -- in most cases minor economic demands were met -- but at their political implications. Thus the triple struggle of the railroad workers as well as the electricians for economic revindication, the ouster of corrupt union leaders, and internal union democracy within a national capitalist mode of production, threatened the state in two ways: First, the elimination of official government-imposed union leadership would also have abolished the state's control over the unions, and second, the demand for democracy would have implied the restructuring of the Mexican political, social and economic system taking power and control away from the state bureaucracy and the management of the nationalized railroad and electric enterprises, and giving this power and control to the workers involved. To the state this was a preposterous proposition. Given the strategic position of the railroad workers and the

electricians in the economy -- a shutdown of the railroads and a cutting off of electricity would paralyze the whole country -- the government, to preserve its power, resorted to repression and rationalized it with the absurd suggestion that foreign subversive forces were influencing a minority of Mexicans to overthrow the authorities. This rationale becomes comprehensible, yet not acceptable, given the official ideology of class collaboration in the interest of the national good, which must see all threats to the established system as coming from outside the country. The same justification for repression played its usual part in the doctors' strike, the student movement and the STUNAM.

While the organizations of the railroad workers, the electricians, and the doctors were marked by their homogeneity concerning class background and occupation, the STUNAM and the student movement in particular stood out because of their extreme heterogeneity both in social make-up and in ideological viewpoints indicating the direction future similar movements will go to consolidate a real opposition force vis-à-vis the Mexican power structure.

The student movement of 1968 in particular was characterized by special features. Students cannot be put into a neat class category, since their position within the universities is quite transitory. Even though most of their parents were from middle class backgrounds, many students will have difficulty finding employment commensurate with their education and ability and will become wage-dependent just as their working class counterparts in a world which is becoming increasingly subordinated to international monopolies as the supreme mode of economic organization. According to the Guardian (Jan. 10, 1979), 6,100 corporate mergers took place in 1969,

2,225 in 1977 and about 2,000 in 1978 in the United States, with repercussions on the very vulnerable and dependent Mexican economy. These mergers are part of the continuing concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer monopolies. The knowledge of monopolistic takeovers of the most important branches of industry homogenized the students' worldview with that of the working class despite their advantage of a higher education. The students' consciousness, as well as the awareness of the STUNAM's professionals of their social downward mobility into the ranks of the proletarian masses, is a serious cause for the reevaluation of the role of the middle classes in the transformation of society. Skilled unionized workers are generally better paid than some middle class professionals, and the middle classes are prone to unemployment just about as much as their working class counterparts. So far the middle classes have been considered by the liberal ideology as a buffer between the discontent of the lower classes and the privileged position of the upper class. In the case of the FSTSE this still holds true. However the trend of rapid deterioration of purchasing power through inflation and wage controls experienced both by labor and professionals suggests that both classes have more in common these days than ever before. Moreover, in 1968 the children of the middle classes engaged in anti-authoritarian, pro-democratic struggles all around the globe. These new activists acquired their radical awareness at the end of police sticks, which were swinging from one end of the earth to the other on behalf of archaic institutions more dead than alive. Even though the students were in a privileged position, this privilege signaled nothing but frustration, particularly for the politically aware, because they experienced daily the absurdity of an economic and political system which

valued as its gods expansion and growth of unnecessary goods (who needs more cars in an age that screams for rapid transit systems?) and huge profits for a few while at the same time neglecting the basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care) of the majority of the population. Their anti-authoritarianism was rooted in their temporarily subversive condition, in which they had not yet assumed a materially rewarding occupation and were far from achieving power positions. The Mexican students were not bound together by an abstract theory of history which, moreover, had been perverted by post-revolutionary governments, but by a disgust for a society which continually chattered about social justice and freedom and yet brutally repressed all attempts at social, political and economic emancipation of the masses.

Furthermore, a new feature of the 1968 student movement was that its anti-authoritarianism expressed itself in the rejection of a vanguard, a party, or any leadership (bureaucratic or otherwise.) The National Strike Council was the only body which coordinated action. It consisted of 150 members, who were rotated regularly to avoid cooptation or violence from the government. This trait frustrated the authorities incredibly, since one of their favorite tactics was to behead the movement. However, to the police's consternation, whenever they thought they had captured a "ring-leader," somebody else would step into that person's place and the fight continued. The leaderlessness of the student movement testified to the democratic procedures utilized, since the lack of formal organization prevented the formation of hierarchical differentiation. Yet, it was also this lack of formal organization on a mass level which may have contributed to the defeat of the movement. Spontaneity, no matter how valuable, is



just no substitute for disciplined organization. In 1968 about 100,000 students mobilized the support of half a million of Mexico City's inhabitants. This tremendous discontent was not systematically exploited to forge a serious opposition force to the government, even though the chance was there. Since the government's justification for the massacre on October 2, 1968 was that the young people carried firearms, whereas in reality they did not (Guevara Niebla, 1978:33), future demonstrators might as well learn from this lesson and be armed. The same excuse had also been used for the police occupation of University City in 1977, even though the strikers were unarmed.

Notwithstanding all the above, the student movement also triumphed insofar as it inaugurated an era of decomposition of bourgeois hegemony in its PRI-government form. The post-1968 governments of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo had heard the cries of the people, and in order to avoid the state machine from totally disappearing in the morass of corruption, inefficiency and insensitivity, Echeverría decided on an "apertura democrática" (democratic opening) and López Portillo on a program of "political reform" to satisfy the most immediate and threatening demands for democratization. Even though both programs have little value in real life, they at least give the appearance that something positive is done about the affairs of the state. In 1968 the masses again made history since they forced their political leaders to at least consider their demands. However, again the "great men" of history have not been responsive enough.

The University conflict in 1977 showed some continuity with the student movement in that many young professionals, who had been students in

1968 (for example, Adolfo Gilly, Heberto Castillo), carried the fight for socio-economic and political emancipation to a different level. Much of the spontaneity of 1968 had disappeared but not the ideological or social heterogeneity of the participants. As in 1968 the ideological convictions ranged from left-wing liberalism (which proposed that the system, if pressured enough, would produce worthwhile reforms evolving structures of "enlightened" capitalism) to moral crusades against corruption, to the familiar radical position that the industrial workers together with proletarianized professionals remained the essential engine for a socialist revolution. In contrast to the student movement, however, the STUNAM participants, as state employees, were financially dependent on the government and were, therefore, in a much more vulnerable position. This particular characteristic the STUNAM also shared with the railroad men, the electricians, and the doctors. The STUNAM, however, differed from those three organizations in the heterogeneous make-up of its members, thus surpassing the usual divisions of workers into particular job categories and carrying unionism to a more advanced level. The organization of maintenance workers, administrative employees and faculty into one union indicates a new trend in middle class consciousness particularly of the intellectual sector, the trend towards identification with the working class. Whether this concern will translate into genuine partnerships, where all involved recognize the artificiality of the division of labor into classes and within these classes the arbitrariness of stratification into ranks (e.g. Clerk I, Clerk II, Clerk III, etc.) and will fight for the elimination of class society to create an atmosphere in which all producers (manual or intellectual) receive an equal share in the distribu-

tion of national income as well as control over the means and mode of production, remains to be seen. Indications, so far, are that all cases studied -- with the exception of the students, who were not directly affected -- were still promoting pay differentiation on grounds of seniority and type of work performed. It appears that the Mexican independent movement's priority at the present time is to gain strength in numbers, to work towards the consolidation of a mass base, and to operate within the constitutional framework for the democratization of political processes in the country.

In summing up, all five movements stood out because of the great support they received from different sectors of the population. The demonstrations of solidarity legitimized the movements, since they received the open approval of a good part of the people. All five movements refused the "feudal" custom of negotiating with intermediaries. The students even went so far as to demand a public dialogue to force the government to speak out honestly and also to avoid that individuals could be bribed behind the scenes. All five movements favored the resurrection of the badly abused principles of the Mexican Revolution as written down in the 1917 Constitution. All five movements promoted democratic procedures within unions and the nation and denounced the corrupt practices of union leadership and government officials. All five movements suffered repression even though they operated within a national reformist frame of reference rather than a revolutionary model. Objectively, conditions for revolution exist, subjectively they do not.

Perhaps Crane Brinton's seven generalizations about social conditions which precede revolutions may be an indicator of where the Mexican revolu-

tionary barometer stands. Brinton compared four famous revolutions: the English of 1640, the American of 1776, the French of 1789, and the Russian of 1917. He found that

- 1) in all four societies, the economy had been improving. The rebels were not starving people but malcontents left outside of the established system;
- 2) there were strong class antagonisms between the privileged aristocracy and the new moneyed class slightly below them;
- 3) many intellectuals deserted the régime;
- 4) the government machinery became outmoded, unresponsive, and unable to cope with the new demands of a changing society;
- 5) many members of the ruling class suffered from self-doubt and lost their confidence in their own legitimacy. Thus, they became politically inefficient;
- 6) there was a breakdown of the financial administration of the state;
- 7) repression did not stop the revolution (1952:passim).

One might want to add an eighth point to these generalizations:

- 8) the armed forces and the police withdraw their loyalty to the régime.

When these eight points are compared with today's Mexico one finds that since 1940 the economy most certainly had been on the upswing. Only since the early 1970s, affected by the international economic recession, has the Mexican economy suffered reverses as well. However, economic growth in Mexico has never meant economic well-being for the masses. Inflation very noticeably cut into the purchasing power of the popular classes, and the decline in take-home income has been part of the causes of mass demonstrations, as well as the feeling of being left out of the decision-

making processes. The second point does not apply to Mexico yet, since no strong antagonisms have developed between the national bourgeoisie and the international monopolies, which brings into play another dimension: the Mexican dependent condition. As for number three above, many intellectuals have already deserted the régime. In addition, the Mexican government apparatus, most certainly, has become outmoded, unresponsive, and unable to cope with the demands of a changing society. Echeverría's "apertura democrática" and López Portillo's political reform can only be seen as temporary band-aids, which will not cure the general malady of the nation. Number five does not seem to be applicable at the present time. The Mexican ruling elite appears to be quite confident that it will be able to weather any storm. This point, however, seems to be quite irrelevant, when seen in the light of the January 1979 departure of the Shah of Iran, who until very recently held that he was governing in the name of his people. In other words, the Mexican ruling oligarchy appears to be somewhat overconfident. As to point six, if a \$30 billion foreign debt indicates a financial crisis of the state, then this point applies as well. Repression most certainly has not eliminated demands for change, and as for number eight, it has to be pointed out that the Mexican army, well-housed, well-paid and properly cared for, has not yet shown any sign of disloyalty to the régime; neither have the various categories of police forces. And here lies the crux of the matter. As long as the state has the repressive apparatus at its disposal, opposition movements will find it hard to succeed. Moreover, the Mexican left has to take into account not only confrontations with the army and the police but also ultra-right wing paramilitary provocateurs, which are utilized to discredit the left in many ways. Proceso

(July 11, 1977:14-20) identified 45 of such organizations operating in Mexico. Some of them restrict their actions to the ideological struggle against everything they assume to be progressive, socialist, communist or simply reformist. Some of these battles are fought out within periodicals by the use of smear campaigns against progressive movements. Others are fought out via organized armed paramilitary cells. In addition, it remains useful to remember that United States' interests will do anything to maintain their lucrative enterprises in Mexico. Thus, explains a former CIA agent:

Since the 1960s however, as the psychological appeal of peaceful reform diminished in the face of failure, compensatory measures have been increasingly needed: repression and special programmes, as in the field of organized labour, to divide the victims and neutralize their leaders. These measures constitute the four most important counter-insurgency programmes through which the United States government strengthens the ruling minorities in Latin America: CIA operations, military assistance and training missions, AID [Agency for International Development] Public Safety programmes to help police, and trade-union operations through ORIT [Inter-American Regional Labor Organization], the International Trade Secretariats and the AIFLD [American Institute for Free Labor Development] -- all largely controlled by the CIA (Agee, 1975:566).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the CTM is the most important ORIT affiliate after the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Additionally, the irrationality of repressing Mexican democratic movements may be much better understood when taking into consideration how close the Mexican government was (and probably still is) to information emanating from CIA agencies rather than tuning into its people. For example, Agee writes:

The station [CIA agency in Mexico City] also prepared a daily intelligence summary for Díaz Ordaz with a section on activities of Mexican revolutionary organizations and communist diplomatic missions and a section on international developments based on information from headquarters. Other

reports, often relating to a single subject, are passed to Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría and top security officials. These reports, like the daily round-up, include information from station unilateral penetration agents with due camouflaging to protect the identity of the sources. The station is much better than are the Mexican services, and is thus of great assistance to the authorities in planning for raids, arrests and other repressive action (1975:526, my emphasis).

The Mexican government's alienation from its own people is expressed by the trust it places in information gathered by an outside force, whose understanding of Mexican social and historical processes must by its very nature be quite limited.

Since the reformist movement is seen as a "revolutionary threat" by government and CIA agencies, the protesters might as well turn revolutionary and be prepared when the full force of repression hits them.

Moreover, if genuine change is to come about Mexicans will have to free themselves from the myth of their "revolutionary" Constitution and look forward rather than backward. They will have to reject the populist trap and most significantly, they will have to mobilize and organize the abundant but isolated discontent of a great mass of disillusioned Mexicans. The task is immense, particularly when seen in the light of the recent oil finds in Campeche, Tabasco, and Chiapas. Mexico apparently is floating on a sea of oil and gas larger than that found in Alaska. The proven reserves consist of 40 billion barrels and the potential reserves are estimated at 200 billion barrels. The Mexican President's ability to negotiate a good price for oil, to diversify oil exports, and, most importantly, to use the new found wealth for internal construction and industrialization will in great measure determine Mexico's future and the future of independent movements.

Recent developments in Iran force the United States to look even

closer to its southern neighbor. López Portillo will have to perform a dangerous juggling act in order not to let Mexico's dependence on foreign technology and skills determine that most of the oil should go to the United States for a low price.

However, even if wealth from oil sales flows into Mexico, this does not necessarily mean that it will be distributed among the masses. Certainly, the PRI-government will have more opportunity to coopt militants. On the other hand, however, the new Mexican left has developed an ethic of uncooptability. If this ethic remains a principle in the Mexican left, and if the living standard of the masses does not improve considerably in the near future, the independent movement will probably gain in momentum.



EXPLANATORY FOOTNOTES

1. Machismo projects the picture of the aggressive male protagonist, constantly concerned to create the impression of masculinity and courage, invulnerability and indifference to the attacks of others. Women are expected to accept such behavior passively.
2. Científicos: They were Porfirio Díaz' braintrusts. They created an ideology based on European positivism, which justified Díaz' dictatorship and the privileged positions of a few.
3. For more details concerning the events in Río Blanco, Cananea, etc. see Rodney Anderson, Outcasts in Their Own Land: Mexican Industrial Workers, 1906-1911, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, Illinois, 1976; James D. Cockcroft, Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution: 1900-1913, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1968; Salvador Hernández, Magonismo y movimiento obrero en Mexico: Cananea y Río Blanco, CELA, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, UNAM, México, 1977.
4. Charrismo means imposed and corrupt union leadership. The word is derived from charro, which in Mexico portrays a person highly skilled at horseback riding. A fiesta de charrería is a formalized exhibition of horsemanship. A labor leader, Díaz de León, gave the term its political significance. While he was the secretary general of the STFRM the conditions of the union members had deteriorated while his own financial situation had improved spectacularly. He liked to take part in fiestas de charrería which earned him the epithet of El Charro (Stevens, 1974:105).
5. The magonistas declared war on authority, the Church and capital. They asked for the expropriation of the means of production to be turned over to and worked in common by men and women (Flores Magón, 1970:152-153).
6. "An ejido is a communal tenure to which members have usufruct rights, usually in the form of an individual plot of land. The term ejido refers both to such communal lands and to the community of peasants who own them. The ejido as a social institution has its own structures: the general assembly, a three member governing board, a vigilance committee and, under certain circumstances, a collective credit society. ... The ejido plot holder is in fact a small individual farmer. In most cases, his plot of land is too small for him to obtain from it sufficient income, or to find on it full employment. Many ejido farmers buy additional land, if they can afford it, or else work part-time on larger privately owned holdings or emigrate temporarily to seek employment in the cities or as agricultural laborers in the United States. A recent study in Mexico showed that fully 84 percent of all ejido plots can be classified as infrasubsistence or sub-family farms, i.e., they are too small to provide

full employment and an adequate income for a peasant family. To be sure, among privately owned farms, 85 percent fall into the same category" (Stavenhagen, 1975:146).

7. For a comparison of the PML program with the 1917 Constitution see James Cockcroft, Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, pp. 239-245.
8. The Board of Conciliation and Arbitration was invested with the power of approval of all new unions. Without registration and acknowledgment by the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, a union had no right to enter into a collective bargaining agreement with an employer.
9. The Federal Labor Law has its origins in Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution. It recognizes the existence of the class system of the Mexican capitalist society, as well as its inherent antagonism. It proposes the institutionalized regulation of the class conflict at the federal level.
10. CONCANACO was founded in 1917 and CONCAMIN in 1918. Both were born as autonomous public institutions, and they represented the general interest of commerce and of national industry as consulting organs of the state.
11. Anderson Clayton in Mexico is 100 percent U.S.-controlled; General Foods and Nestlé Company occupy important places in the control over foods. But, more significant is foreign penetration in the most dynamic manufacturing enterprises which reap high profits and decapitalize the country through profit outflow. Among those are Union Carbide, Syntex, Richardson Merrel, Searle, etc. in the production of chemicals; John Deere in the manufacturing of equipment and machinery; General Electric in electrical and related articles; Fort Motor Co., General Motors, Chrysler Corporation, Nissan and Volkswagen in the automobile industry; and Olivetti, IBM, and NCR in the manufacturing of computers and office equipment (Hernández & Trejo Delabre, 1975: 82-84). Needless to say, these are not all the foreign corporations which operate in Mexico, but they are among the most important ones.
12. Foreign investment in Mexico amounted to 1,100 million dollars in 1971, and the profit outflow reached 750 million dollars (Excélsior, July 22, 1972).
13. The Monterrey Group is centered in the capital city of Nuevo León. It is a conservative, often reactionary, voice which is not ignored in Mexico City. The Monterrey Group has made its influence felt both within the PRI and at times within the PAN. Some of its industrial affiliates include much of the glass-producing industry, the automobile assembly plants, a number of iron and steel foundries, and related commercial service firms. The group opposes government controls as well as corporate state capitalism. Its orientation is the laissez-

faire capitalism of the nineteenth century. It finds now its expression in the right-wing of the PRI. Much of its membership is opposed to excessive state capitalism, but it cannot afford a breach with the government since it has strong socio-economic ties with the PRI. It is rumored that the Monterrey Group has sponsored such ultra-reactionary organizations as MURO and financed the journal Resumen, known for its Social Darwinist orientation (Johnson, 1971:75-76).

14. North & Raby (1977) suggest that Cárdenas may have wanted to implement a far more radical program leading to socialism had it not been for the consolidation of internal as well as external conservative opposition. The Soviet author Anatol Shulgovski (1967) asserts that the strategy and practical politics of Cárdenas were a means to a non-capitalist development.
15. The Congreso del Trabajo was founded in 1966 to bring together all confederations as well as national industrial unions. The CT is not a federation. It is more of a forum where different viewpoints are discussed. It was initiated by G. Díaz Ordaz and has been promoted by the PRI. The major goal was to create unity among unions and eliminate personal conflicts between leaders. However, the CT's most important task is to neutralize, mediate and control working class demands. The CT reinforces the Mexican dependent capitalist model and makes it function better.
16. Cárdenas founded the Instituto Politécnico Nacional to upgrade the technological skills of manpower required for industrial growth. Students were channeled at an early age into university preparatory or vocational groups, with the parents' socio-economic status an important indicator of career opportunities. For a long time the "Poli" reflected the anti-intellectual attitude of the Cárdenas' administration, which advocated greater prestige for technical training. By the 1960s, however, students of the IPN and the UNAM shared leftist ideas and anti-establishment attitudes.
17. The Frente Nacional de Acción Popular was formed by over 300 worker, peasant and student organizations in May 1976 with the electrical workers at the core. It is likely that Lopez Portillo will use, like his predecessors, reforms, bribery of leaders, and selective repression to break up the unity of this Popular Front.
18. TELEVISIA controls 90 percent of the television stations in Mexico. The major shareholders in TELEVISIA are the Azcárraga family and O'Farril family, who also own large amounts of stock in American Airlines, Marriot and Western International Hotels, and Spanish language channels in the United States directed at Chicano and Puerto Rican viewers (LAWG Letter, Vol. II. No. 3:5)

19. Julián Adem is an internationally known scholar. His biography appears in American Men of Science; Leaders of Science; Creative and Successful Personalities of the World; Who's Who in the South and South West; and Who's Notable in Mexico. Adem developed thermodynamic methods for agropecuarian planning and other technologies important for the national economy. His methods have already been utilized in the U.S.A. and in the U.S.S.R. but not in Mexico.
20. The weekly magazine, Proceso, has been able to escape this censorship buying most of its newsprint on the black market.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AMMRI

Asociación Mexicana de Médicos Residentes e Internos  
(Mexican Association of Resident Doctors and Interns)

CANACINTRA

Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Transformación  
(National Chamber of Manufacturing Industry)

CGT

Confederación General de Trabajadores  
(General Workers' Confederation)

CNED

Central Nacional de Estudiantes Democráticos  
(National Central of Democratic Students)

CNC

Confederación Nacional Campesina  
(National Peasant Confederation)

CNOP

Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares  
(National Confederation of Popular Organizations)

COM

Casa del Obrero Mundial  
(House of the World Worker)

CROM

Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana  
(Regional Mexican Workers' Confederation)

CTM

Confederación de Trabajadores de México  
(Mexican Workers' Confederation)

FNET

Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Técnicos  
(National Federation of Technical Students)

FSTSE

Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado  
(Federation of Workers' Unions at the Service of the State)

IPN

Instituto Politécnico Nacional  
(National Polytechnical Institute)

ISSTE

Instituto de Seguridad Social al Servicio de los Trabajadores del Estado  
(Social Security Institute at the Service of the State's Workers)

PLM

Partido Liberal Mexicano  
(Mexican Liberal Party)

PAN

Partido de Acción Nacional  
(National Action Party)

PARM

Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana  
(Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution)

PCM

Partido Comunista Mexicano  
(Mexican Communist Party)

PIPSA

Productora e Importadora de Papel, Sociedad Anónima  
(Paper Producer and Importer, Inc.)

PNA

Partido Nacional Agrarista  
(National Agrarian Party)

PNR

Partido Nacional Revolucionario  
(National Revolutionary Party)

PPS

Partido Popular Socialista  
(Popular Socialist Party)

PRM

Partido de la Revolución Mexicana  
(Party of the Mexican Revolution)

PRI

Partido Revolucionario Institucional  
(Institutionalized Revolutionary Party)

SME

Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas  
(Mexican Union of Electricians)

SPAUNAM

Sindicato del Personal Académico de la UNAM  
(Union of the Academic Personnel of the UNAM)

STERM

Sindicato de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana  
(Union of Electrical Workers of the Mexican Republic)

STEUNAM

Sindicato de Trabajadores y Empleados de la UNAM  
(Union of Workers & Employees of the UNAM)

STFRM

Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros de la República Mexicana  
(Union of Railroad Workers of the Mexican Republic)

STUNAM

Sindicato de Trabajadores de la UNAM  
(Union of the Workers of the UNAM)

SUTERM

Sindicato Único de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana  
(Only Union of Electrical Workers of the Mexican Republic)

UNAM

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
(National Autonomous University of Mexico)

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