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Garcia, Alberto Maldonado

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The Politics of Bracero Migration

By

Alberto Maldonado Garcia

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Margaret Chowning, Chair

Professor Brian DeLay

Professor Mark A. Healey

Professor Laura J. Enriquez

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Abstract

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From 1942 to 1964, a bilateral agreement known as the Bracero Program allowed Mexican men to work in the United States as seasonal contract laborers. During the program's 22-year duration, Mexican officials distributed 4.64 million contracts. This dissertation examines two interrelated questions. First, how did the Mexican government distribute contracts? And second, what motivated rural workers from the center-western states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán – the states that sent the most braceros, between one-third and one-half of the total, to the U.S. – to want to migrate as braceros.

Political factors linked to the implementation of and conservative Catholic opposition to the government-sponsored agrarian reform heavily influenced demand for bracero contracts. During the 1920s and 1930s, the federal government expropriated millions of hectares of land in the center-west and redistributed them among hundreds of thousands of rural workers. But numerous agrarian reform beneficiaries were granted insufficient or poor-quality lands, and the statutes that governed agrarian reform communities limited what beneficiaries could do with their lands. Those beneficiaries who had been adversely affected by the agrarian reform's structures expressed an interest in migrating through the Bracero Program. The land redistribution process also drew the ire of conservative Catholics who believed that private property was sacrosanct and who were also upset with a series of anticlerical measures implemented by federal- and state-level administrations. This discontent led to open rebellion between 1926 and 1929, and Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán were the epicenter of the conflict. Community-level clashes between conservative Catholic and pro-government factions continued into the years of the Bracero Program and center-western rural workers who were pushed off their lands because of these conflicts also became interested in migrating as braceros. Federal officials acknowledged this demand by sending a significant number of contracts to center-western state governments. But because they had failed when they tried to directly recruit and select braceros, and because state-level officials did not want to risk losing control of that process, it was municipal-level officials that ultimately determined who received bracero contracts. Municipal authorities then used the bracero recruitment and selection process to enrich themselves, reward local allies, or remove local opponents. Thus, this dissertation shows that bracero migration was a deeply politicized process.

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in a word, fantastic. Here's to more football, potato chips, and Simpsons' marathons in the years to come, and here's also to some day learning if the call was indeed about our cube. Last, but certainly not least, Zoe Griffith, who made this dissertation better by reading every word of it, has always been there no matter how many time zones separated us, and who has been a far better friend than I deserve.

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Introduction

The Bracero Program and the Politics of Mexico-U.S. Migration

In May 1942, Mexican President Manuel Ávila Camacho convened several high-ranking members of his cabinet to debate an important proposal. The United States government had formally requested that Mexican workers be allowed to migrate north, where they would replace the young farm and factory workers who had been conscripted to fight in the Second World War. After two months of discussion, Ávila Camacho and his advisors decided that since they could not prevent emigration, they would cooperate with the U.S. and attempt to regulate it: they agreed to sanction the departure of seasonal contract laborers, and they also announced that government agents would directly intervene in the recruitment and selection of these migrant guest workers.¹ The first *braceros*, as the guest workers came to be known, arrived in the U.S. in September 1942. The Bracero Program began as a wartime measure, but because Mexican officials hoped braceros' earnings would boost rural development and U.S. growers wanted continued access to a relatively low-wage labor force, it was continued through 1964.² By the time the last braceros returned to Mexico, Mexican authorities had distributed 4.64 million contracts.³

Ávila Camacho's decision to sanction and manage widespread emigration was unprecedented. Previous administrations had publicly discouraged emigration because they worried that too many workers were leaving for the U.S., although these public worries did not prevent departures, especially during periods when the U.S. government relaxed entry restrictions or when Mexicans wanted to escape from political violence.⁴ The decision also

¹ Manuel Ávila Camacho, Acuerdo previniendo que se hagan las gestiones necesarias para impartir seguridades a los trabajadores mexicanos que emigren a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, July 23, 1942, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CXXXIII, Número 45, Sección Primera, August 21, 1942, 1-2. The administration members Ávila Camacho consulted were Foreign Relations Secretary Ezequiel Padilla, Government Secretary Miguel Alemán, Labor Secretary Ignacio García Téllez, Agriculture Secretary Marte R. Gómez, and Public Health Chief Víctor Fernández Manero.

² For the attitudes of Mexican officials, see Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 35-36; and Michael Snodgrass, "The Bracero Program, 1942-1964," in *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*, ed. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86. For the attitudes of U.S. growers, see Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California, 1942-1960* (Santa Barbara: McNally and Loftin, 1964); and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 142-143.

³ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 138, 157. The total number of contracts distributed was 4,646,199.

⁴ For early twentieth-century concerns about excessive emigration, see Alexandra Délano, *Mexico and Its Diaspora in the United States: Policies of Emigration Since 1848* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 68-78; and David Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages its Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 39-43. For the relaxation of entry restrictions during the late 1910s and early 1920s, see Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *El Primer Programa Bracero y el Gobierno de México, 1917-1918* (San Luis Potosí: El Colegio de San Luis, 1999); and Gilbert G. González, "Mexican Labor Migration, 1876-1924," in *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*, ed. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28-50. Alanís Enciso describes this relaxation of restrictions as the "first" Bracero Program because U.S. employers gave contracts to the Mexican workers who entered the country during this period; however, there was no bilateral agreement between the Mexican and U.S. governments during these years. For those who migrated to escape the violence of the religious-political conflicts of the 1920s, see Julia G. Young, *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Young notes that some who left Mexico for the U.S. during the 1920s were forcibly exiled. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, anthropologists

profoundly influenced later migration patterns. For reasons that this dissertation will explore in depth, most braceros, between one-third and one-half of the total, were rural workers from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán, three states west of Mexico City on the central plateau.⁵ These center-western braceros established the type of social and financial support networks that, according to network theory, attract future migrants.⁶ Indeed, the plurality of post-Bracero Program migrants from 1970 to 1992, between 30 and 40 percent, continued to come from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán.⁷ And many of these late twentieth-century center-western migrants were either related to former braceros or came from communities that had previously sent braceros to the United States.⁸

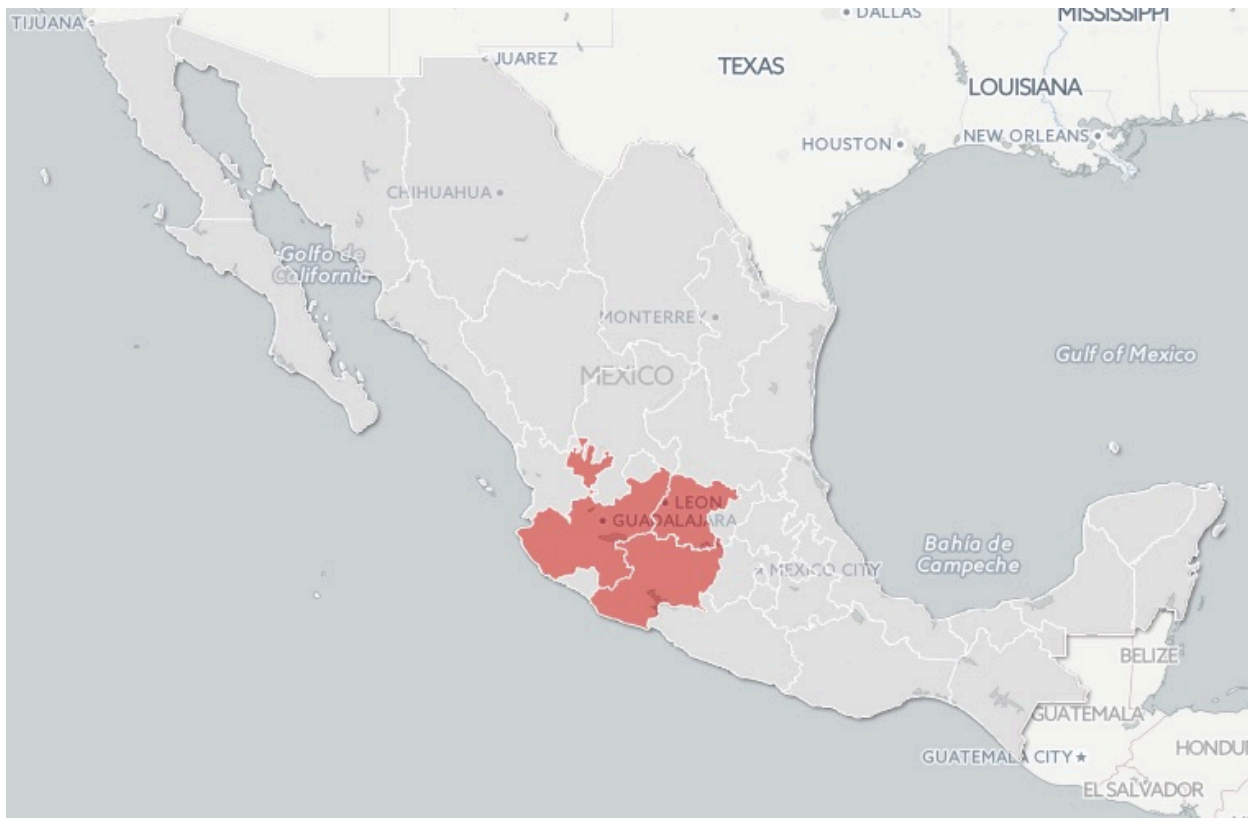
Manuel Gamio and Paul Taylor conducted two of the first studies of Mexican migrants. Gamio examined immigrants who worked in the Chicago metropolitan area, and Taylor focused on socioeconomic conditions in the sending community of Arandas, Jalisco. For this, see Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1930); and Paul S. Taylor, *Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933).

⁵ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157; Harry E. Cross and James A. Sandos, *Across the Border: Rural Development in Mexico and Recent Migration to the United States* (Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 44. According to Cross and Sandos, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers received 62,110 bracero contracts between 1942 and 1944, 161,590 contracts between 1953 and 1954, and 385,844 contracts between 1960 and 1964. Per Ngai, there were 118,471 total contracts distributed between 1942 and 1944, 510,413 contracts between 1953 and 1954, and 1,166,845 contracts between 1960 and 1964.

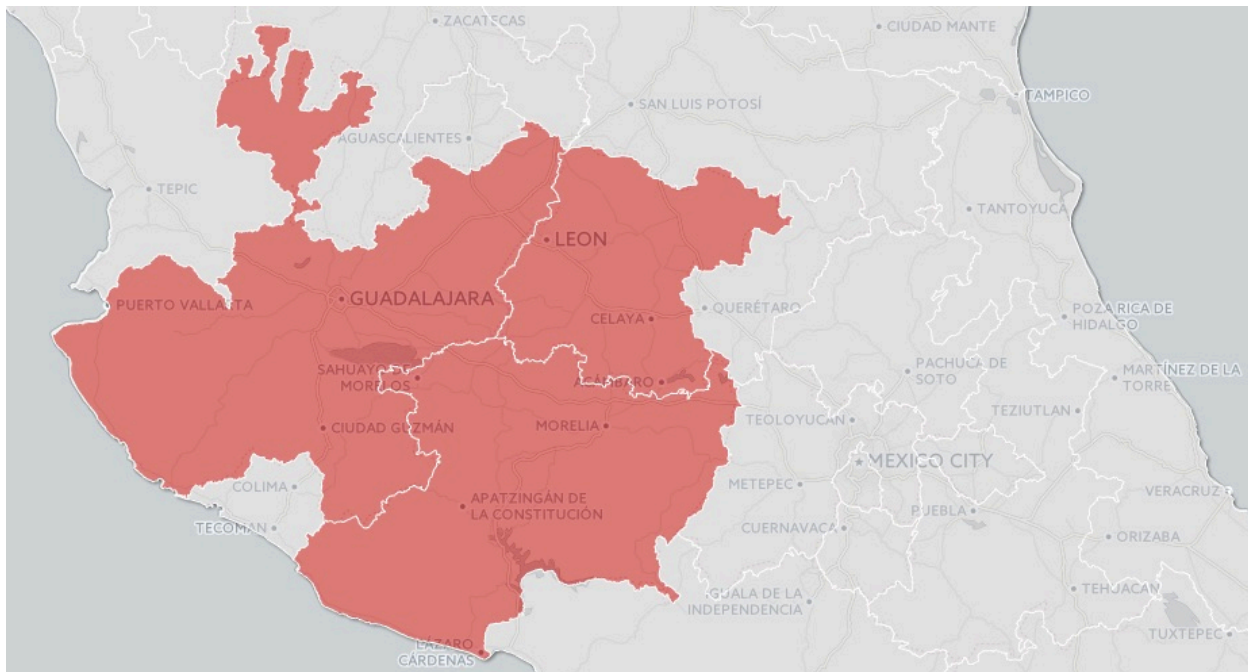
⁶ Douglas S. Massey, et al., "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population and Development Review* 19:3 (1993): 448-450. Specifically, once first-wave migrants establish themselves in a receiving community, the social and economic risks of later migrants are reduced because a receiving infrastructure is already in place. As more migrants arrive in the receiving society, migrant social networks expand, and that in turn attracts more migrants.

⁷ Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and René M. Zenteno, "Mexican Immigration to the United States, Continuities and Changes," *Latin American Research Review* 36:1 (2001), 110-114.

⁸ Studies of post-Bracero Program migration are replete with examples of late twentieth-century migrants who knew migration was an option because they were related to or knew former braceros. One study that highlights the importance of migrant networks and how they help migration become a "self-sustaining" process is Douglas S. Massey et al., *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Massey and his co-authors examined three Jalisco sending communities and one in Michoacán.



Map 0.1: Mexico, states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán shaded in red. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48490>.



Map 0.2: Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48490>.

Despite its unprecedented nature and dramatic impact on later migration patterns, scholars of Mexico have produced only a handful of historical analyses of the Bracero Program.⁹ These few studies have primarily been interested in what the federal government achieved by participating in the Bracero Program. For example, in a short but provocative chapter of their 1981 book, Harry Cross and James Sandos asserted that the Bracero Program helped the federal government consolidate its power, since authorities used the program to remove political opponents, particularly members of conservative Catholic opposition groups.¹⁰ More recently, Michael Snodgrass has argued that federal officials used bracero contracts to reward members of unions that were loyal to the government and the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).¹¹ And in her recent monograph, Deborah Cohen posited that the program allowed agents of the Mexican state to establish a visible presence in rural areas during the bracero recruitment and selection process.¹² Insofar as these scholars discussed what motivated rural workers to want to migrate as braceros, they contended that they were influenced primarily by socioeconomic motives, and more specifically by a desire to earn monies they could then invest in farm equipment, housing, and new business ventures.

The dearth of Mexico-centered historical studies of the Bracero Program contrasts with the relatively large number of ethnographic and social scientific studies – which rely on interviews and surveys of migrants instead of written documents – that focus on post-Bracero Program migration.¹³ Since post-Bracero Program migration produced a scant paper trail – there were an estimated 28 million undocumented entries between 1965 and 1986, and the Mexican government did not attempt to manage emigration during this period – these interviews and surveys proved especially useful for examining the motives of late twentieth-century migrants.¹⁴ The consensus of these ethnographic and social scientific studies was that migration was rural Mexicans' response to market-based economic reforms that, beginning in the early 1980s,

⁹ The lack of Mexico-centered historical analyses of the migratory phenomenon applies to other periods of well. For a discussion of this, see Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, “Histories and Historiographies of Greater Mexico,” in *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*, ed. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxiv-xxv.

¹⁰ Cross and Sandos, *Across the Border*, 35-48.

¹¹ Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964”; “Patronage and Progress: The Bracero Program from the Perspective of Mexico,” in *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 245-266; “The Golden Age of Charrismo: Workers, Braceros, and the Political Machinery of Postrevolutionary Mexico,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 188-191. Snodgrass specifically cited the example of Jalisco's sugar workers' unions.

¹² Cohen, *Braceros*.

¹³ For a discussion of the interview and survey methods employed by migration scholars, see Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey, “Appendix: The Mexican Migration Project,” in *Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project*, ed. Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 321-336.

¹⁴ For the number of undocumented entries between 1965 and 1986, see Douglas S. Massey and Audrey Singer, “New Estimates of Undocumented Migration and the Probability of Apprehension,” *Demography* 32:2 (1995): 203-213. For the Mexican state's retreat from emigration policy during the post-Bracero Program period, see Manuel García y Griego, “Hacia una nueva visión del problema de los indocumentados en Estados Unidos,” in *México y Estados Unidos frente a la migración de los indocumentados*, ed. Manuel García y Griego and Mónica Vereá Campos (México: Coordinación de Humanidades; M.A. Porrúa, 1988), 123-152.

contributed to landlessness, underemployment, and deteriorating living standards in Mexico and created a pool of unregulated jobs in the U.S.¹⁵

The Bracero Program, however, predated the market-based reforms of the late twentieth century, and the motivations of rural workers who migrated through the program have been difficult to examine because of a lack of available documentation.¹⁶ Only within the last decade have archival collections from the post-1940 period been made readily available.¹⁷ Furthermore,

¹⁵ The most refined ethnographic and social scientific examinations of post-Bracero Program migration that reach this conclusion are those produced by Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand, and their academic partners. See Massey et al., *Return to Aztlan*; Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); and Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey, ed., *Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004). See also Jesús Arroyo Alejandre, Adrián de León Arias, and M. Basilia Valenzuela Varela, *Migración rural hacia Estados Unidos: Un estudio regional en Jalisco* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1991); Fernando Cámara and Robert Van Kemper, ed., *Migration Across Frontiers: Mexico and the United States* (Albany, N.Y.: Institute of Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York, 1979); María del Carmen Cebada, “La migración hacia Estados Unidos y dos comunidades de origen en el estado de Guanajuato,” *Regiones* 1:1 (1993): 73-87; Wayne A. Cornelius and Jorge A. Bustamante, ed., *Mexican Migration to the United States: Origins, Consequences, and Policy Options* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1989); Ina R. Dinerman, *Migrants and Stay-at Homes: A Comparative Study of Rural Migration from Michoacán, Mexico* (La Jolla, Calif.: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1982); Jorge Durand, “Guanajuato, cantera de migrantes,” *Encuentro* 4:4 (1990): 49-62; Richard C. Jones, ed., *Patterns of Undocumented Migration: Mexico and the United States* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984); Gustavo López Castro, *La casa dividida: Un estudio de caso sobre la migración a Estados Unidos en un pueblo michoacano* (Zamora, Mich., México: El Colegio de Michoacán; Asociación Mexicana de Población, 1986); Gustavo López Castro, ed., *Migración en el occidente de México* (Zamora, Mich.: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1988); Joshua S. Reichert, “A Town Divided: Economic Stratification and Social Relations in a Mexican Migrant Community,” *Social Problems* 29:4 (1982): 411-423; and Kenneth D. Roberts, “Agrarian Structure and Labor Mobility in Rural Mexico,” *Population and Development Review* 8:2 (1982): 299-322.

¹⁶ Historians of the United States have not had to grapple with the same lack of documentation as their counterparts who focus on Mexico and have thus produced more monograph-length examinations of how the Bracero Program affected North American socioeconomic structures, immigration and labor policy, and ethnic identity. For how the use of low-wage, non-unionized braceros spurred the development of large-scale agribusiness in the western United States, particularly California, see Galarza, *Merchants of Labor*. For the program’s impact on Mexican-American politics and ethnic identity, specifically how some Mexican-American labor, social, and political organizations welcomed the new arrivals while others lobbied for entries to be limited, see David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For Mexican-American labor leaders’ concerns about braceros being used as strikebreakers and being given jobs that domestic-born workers were eligible for, see Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149-157. For an analysis of the interests of specific groups involved in the Bracero Program – employers, labor organizations, diplomats, and state governors, see Richard B. Craig, *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); Craig also touches upon Mexican interest groups. For the administrative disputes between the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, which was committed to ensuring that only contracted braceros entered the country, and the Labor Department, which was sensitive to the demands of employers willing to use both contracted braceros and undocumented workers, see Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New York: Routledge, 1992). For how U.S. immigration laws transformed the braceros into imported colonial subjects who were not allowed to fully integrate into U.S. society, see Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 127-166.

¹⁷ For how the lack of documents influenced cultural histories of the post-1940 period, see Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov, “Assembling the Fragments: Writing a Cultural History of Mexico Since 1940,” in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 3-22. For how the recent availability of documents is reshaping political histories of the post-1940 period, see Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, “The Paradoxes of

since braceros migrated through the auspices of a guest worker program, and because Mexican officials directly recruited and selected braceros, Bracero Program-era migration produced a wealth of documentation, including workers' requests for bracero contracts. Now that those documents are available to scholars, a historical analysis of how braceros received their contracts and what motivated them to seek contracts is possible.

This dissertation uses archival collections in Mexico City's national archive and the executive archives of the key sending states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán to show that bracero migration was deeply politicized in two ways. First, the distribution of bracero contracts and the selection of braceros was an inherently politicized process. Federal officials decided which state governments would be given contracts to distribute and how many they would receive; center-western state officials then divided their contract allotments among municipal governments; and municipal officials ultimately decided which rural workers would actually receive contracts. And second, bracero migration was not simply another instance of impoverished Mexicans seeking better economic opportunities in the United States. Socioeconomic necessity certainly factored into individual decisions to migrate, since many prospective braceros noted in written contract requests that they were landless or unemployed. However, local-level political circumstances and calculations deeply influenced landlessness and unemployment rates and spurred demand for bracero contracts.

The demand for bracero contracts in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán was fueled by local-level political factors, specifically the implementation of the government-sponsored agrarian reform and conservative Catholic opposition to it. Between 1915 and 1940, the federal government expropriated 3.62 million privately owned hectares of land in the center-west and redistributed them among 329,919 *ejidatarios* (agrarian reform beneficiaries).¹⁸ This massive land redistribution process led to the establishment of labyrinthine national- and regional-level agrarian reform bureaucracies and local *ejido* (agrarian reform community) governing councils. These nominally impartial bureaucracies and councils were responsible for deciding which lands were eligible for expropriation, which *ejido* requests were approved, and which prospective *ejidatarios* received lands. But because there were not enough lands to satisfy everyone interested in participating in the agrarian reform, they had to privilege some *ejidos* and *ejidatarios* over others.

The agrarian reform drew the ire of conservative Catholics who believed in the sanctity of private property and were already upset with federal and state administrations that had implemented a series of anticlerical measures.¹⁹ This strong ideological opposition led to open rebellion between 1926 and 1929, when conservative Catholics known as *Cristeros* mobilized against the federal government. There was *Cristero* activity throughout Mexico, but they were especially concentrated in the three states I study here: half of the fighters who participated in the rebellion were from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán.²⁰ After the rebellion ended, many

Revolution," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 6-7.

¹⁸ *Estadísticas históricas de México, Tomo I* (Aguascalientes, Agu.: INEGI, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 1999), 325, 327. The total amount of lands redistributed in the center-west during this period was 3,623,856 hectares.

¹⁹ For revolutionary anticlericalism, see Adrian A. Bantjes, "Mexican Revolutionary Anticlericalism: Concepts and Typologies," *The Americas* 65:4 (2009): 467-480; and Ben Fallaw, "Varieties of Mexican Revolutionary Anticlericalism: Radicalism, Iconoclasm, and Otherwise, 1914-1935," *The Americas* 65:4 (2009): 481-509.

²⁰ Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People between Church and State, 1926-1929*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 85. According to Meyer, there were

former center-western Cristeros joined the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS), a Catholic nationalist organization that opposed land redistribution; 58 percent of UNS members were from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán.²¹

The governments of the bracero period slowed the pace of the agrarian reform – in the center-west between 1941 and 1964, the federal government expropriated 2.21 million hectares and redistributed them among 43,744 ejidatarios – and stopped openly antagonizing faithful Catholics and the Church.²² But despite this, as I show here, community-level clashes between conservative Catholic and pro-government factions continued into the years of the Bracero Program. During these ongoing conflicts, center-western rural workers on both sides of the political divide were forced off their lands or were blacklisted by prospective employers and municipal governments. And when these combative rural workers lost their lands or faced limited employment opportunities, they became interested in migrating as braceros. At the same time, center-western ejidatarios who lost out in the political calculations that determined who received lands (perhaps they had been granted poor-quality or insufficient lands by the government, or had suffered other inequities inherent in the land redistribution process and the structures that governed ejidos) also expressed a desire to receive bracero contracts.

Sources and Structure

This dissertation draws on two types of sources to answer two interrelated questions that at first seem simple. First, how did the Mexican government decide who would receive bracero contracts? And second, why did Mexican rural workers seek bracero contracts? These questions and sources in turn give the dissertation its structure. Part One of the dissertation, “Regulating Departures,” uses over 6,000 government-produced documents, such as correspondence, memoranda, telegrams, broadsides, and lists of selected braceros, to get at the questions of how the government selected braceros and administered the program. These documents detail Mexican authorities’ Bracero Program-related goals and concerns, the eligibility requirements for receiving a contract, the bracero recruitment and selection procedure, and how bracero contracts were distributed within the center-west. Taken together, the three chapters of Part One show that the post-1940 federal government and the ruling PRI were not, as scholars have long argued, authoritarian and Leviathan-like institutions that effectively controlled all political life in the country.²³ Rather, as recently argued by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith, the post-1940

50,000 active Cristeros in 1929; 3,000 were from Guanajuato, 10,000 were from Jalisco, and 12,000 were from Michoacán.

²¹ Pablo Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu: El movimiento sinarquista en el Bajío (1932-1951), Tomo II* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992), 83. There were 310,635 active UNS members during the period 1940-1943; 75,000 were from Guanajuato, 20,965 were from Jalisco, and 85,000 were from Michoacán.

²² *Estadísticas históricas de México, Tomo I*, 325-328. The total amount of lands redistributed in the center-west between 1941 and 1964 was 2,217,988 hectares. For the rapprochement between the federal government and the Church, which was heavily influenced by President Ávila Camacho’s personal faith and a joint commitment to limit communist activities, see Roberto Blancarte, “Intransigence, Anticommunism, and Reconciliation: Church/State Relations in Transition,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 70-88.

²³ Most of the studies that argued that post-1940 federal administrations and the PRI increasingly accrued power and became more authoritarian were published after the violent repression of the 1968 student protest movement and before the liberalization of official archival collections in the early 2000s. The most notable example of this interpretation is Enrique Krauze, *La presidencia imperial: Ascenso y caída del sistema político mexicano* (México,

Mexican state's authoritarianism was a "soft" one riddled with "contradictions, ambiguities, and considerable diversity."²⁴

Chapter One examines federal-level Bracero Program policy. Federal officials initially attempted to centralize the bracero recruitment and selection process in Mexico City, but they delegated this responsibility after a series of highly visible failures. Chapter Two focuses on the state governments of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. All three governments experimented with different methods of distributing bracero contracts and selecting migrant workers within their jurisdictions before ultimately turning over the responsibility to municipal governments. Chapter Three analyzes the administration of the Bracero Program at the municipal level, with special attention paid to the political benefits enjoyed by the municipal officials who selected braceros and to how the process was in many instances corrupted. In all three chapters, I touch upon how official policies influenced the departure of undocumented braceros (during the years of the Bracero Program, U.S. immigration authorities apprehended 4.87 million undocumented Mexican workers).²⁵

Part Two of the dissertation, "Abandoning a Dearly Beloved Land," relies primarily on 2,405 written bracero contract requests that center-western rural workers sent to federal and state authorities. In these written requests, prospective braceros explained why they were interested in migrating and provided details about the agrarian, political, and socioeconomic conditions in their communities. This half of the dissertation focuses mostly on the Lerma-Chapala Basin, the lands of southern Guanajuato, northern Michoacán, and northeastern Jalisco that are watered and drained by the Lerma River and its tributaries. Rural workers from this area made 70 percent of the 2,405 written requests I examined, and 57 percent of the total population of center-western braceros hailed from this sub-region.²⁶ Taken together, Part Two shows that intra-community political factionalism substantially influenced bracero emigration. As noted above, continuing community-level religious-political conflicts and the structures of the agrarian reform resulted in the socioeconomic marginalization of some community members. These material considerations

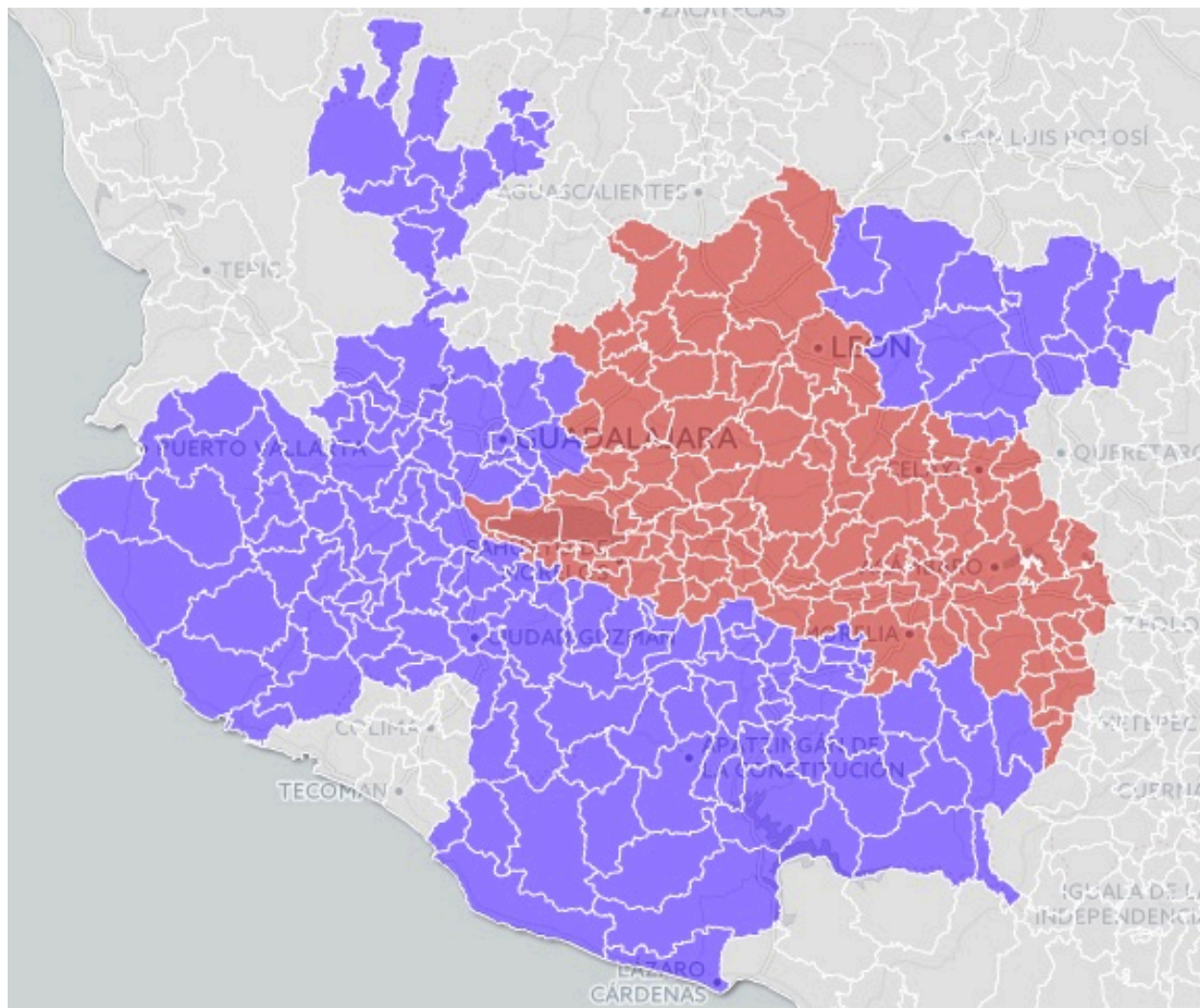
D.F.: Tusquets, 1999). Krauze argued that the federal government, particularly the president and his closest advisors, gathered so much power that they became the "sun" in Mexico's "political solar system." Other scholars who made these arguments are Daniel Cosío Villegas, *El sistema político mexicano: Las posibilidades de cambio* (México: Editorial J. Mortiz, 1973); Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983); Donald J. Mabry, "Changing Models of Mexican Politics: A Review Essay," *The New Scholar* 5:1 (1976): 31-37; Octavio Paz, *Posdata* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1970); Luis Reyna and Richard S. Weinert, ed., *Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1977); Evelyn P. Stevens, "Mexico's PRI: The Institutionalization of Corporatism?," in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*, ed. James M. Malloy (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 227-258. For a thorough review of historical interpretations of the post-1940 period through the early 2000s, see Arthur Schmidt, "Making it Real Compared to What? Reconceptualizing Mexican History Since 1940," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 23-68. For the 1968 student protest movement and its violent repression, see Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013); Elena Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral* (México: Ediciones Era, 1971); and Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 93-131.

²⁴ Gillingham and Smith, "The Paradoxes of Revolution," 27.

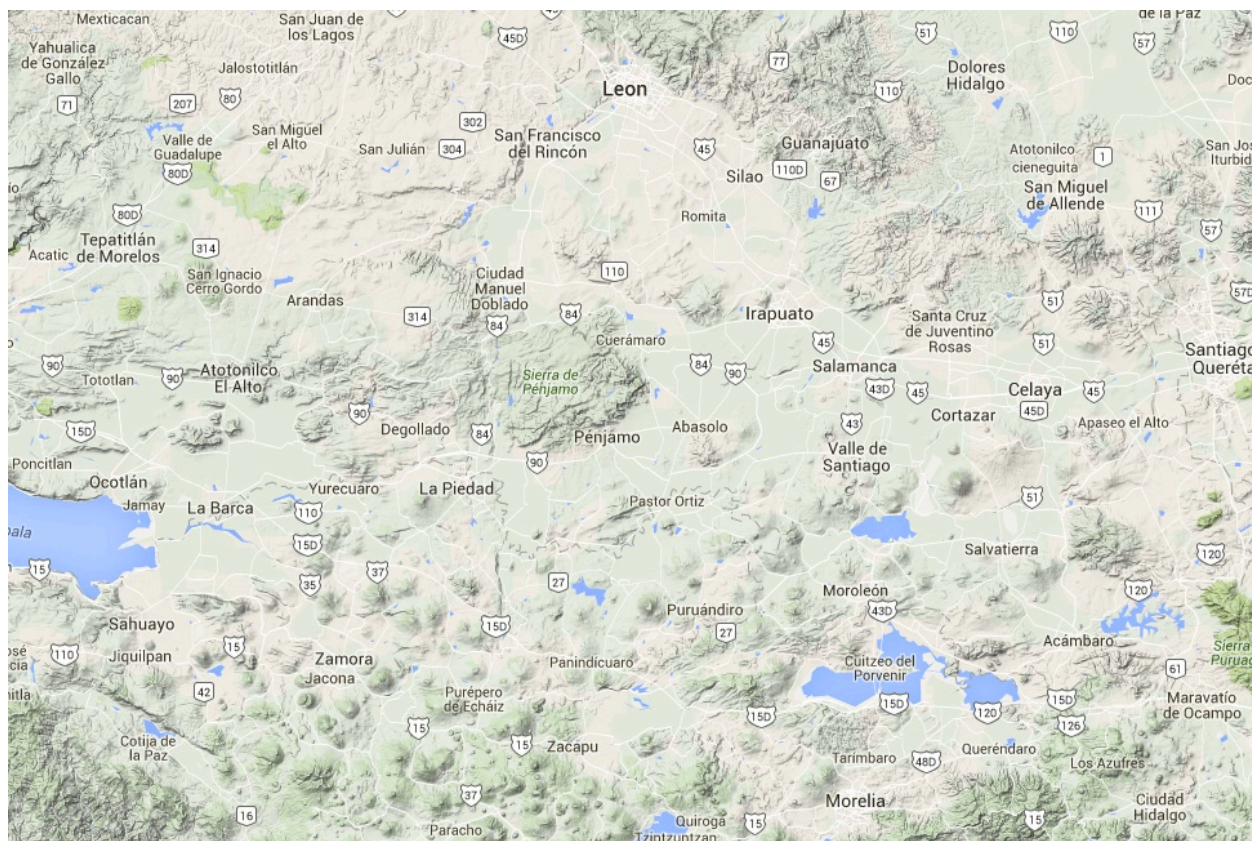
²⁵ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

²⁶ During my research, I was able to document how the governments of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán divided 46,931 of the contracts that were allotted to them. Of these, 26,790 were sent to Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities.

were the proximate factors that motivated individual decisions to migrate, but it would be an oversimplification to analyze them outside of their proper political context.



Map 0.3: Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán; Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities shaded in red. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48530>.



Map 0.4: Lerma-Chapala Basin. Source: Google Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.google.com/maps>.

Chapter Four focuses on prospective Lerma-Chapala Basin braceros who were influenced by community-level conflicts between conservative Catholic opponents of revolutionary policies and those who supported the government. It touches upon the Catholic Church's longstanding institutional strength in the area, and it shows that the conflicts prospective braceros were embroiled in were continuations of ones that began during the Cristero Rebellion. Chapter Five examines prospective Lerma-Chapala Basin braceros who were motivated by the agrarian reform's structural flaws. It details the land redistribution process, the statutes ejidos had to conform to, and how these often worked against the socioeconomic interests of rural workers who had supposedly benefitted from the agrarian reform. Chapter Six serves as a counterpoint to Chapters Four and Five. It explores the Sierra Purépecha, an area of the center-west immediately south of the Lerma-Chapala Basin where, because Cristero activity was not as widespread and fewer lands were redistributed, demand for bracero contracts was relatively depressed. These three chapters will also touch upon rural workers who decided to migrate without bracero contracts.

What both parts of this dissertation show is that the migratory tradition in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán developed in a particular political context shaped by the revolutionary agrarian reform, Catholic resistance to land redistribution, and the soft authoritarianism of post-1940 governments. The socioeconomic standing of prospective center-western braceros was powerfully conditioned by past political decisions, namely whether they had supported or opposed the agrarian reform during the 1920s and 1930s. And when Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers decided that they wanted to migrate as braceros, they had to interact with and curry the favor of the relatively powerful and autonomous municipal governments that

selected braceros. These politicized decisions and interactions essentially opened the path that the millions of center-westerners who migrated during the late twentieth century followed. And it is these decisions and interactions to which I now turn my attention.

Chapter One

“The Urgent Need to Regulate Departures”: The Federal Administration of the Bracero Program

On the evening of October 13, 1950, Mario Coquet and Carlos Sierra, two agents of the Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (DIPS), one of Mexico’s federal-level domestic intelligence agencies, left Mexico City with an assignment. The agents’ task was to post a series of broadsides at bus and train stations in central-western and northern Mexico, and to deliver additional copies of the broadsides to municipal officials in those regions of the country. The broadsides informed prospective braceros that they should not travel north to the border region to seek work contracts, since the most recent contracting period had ended.

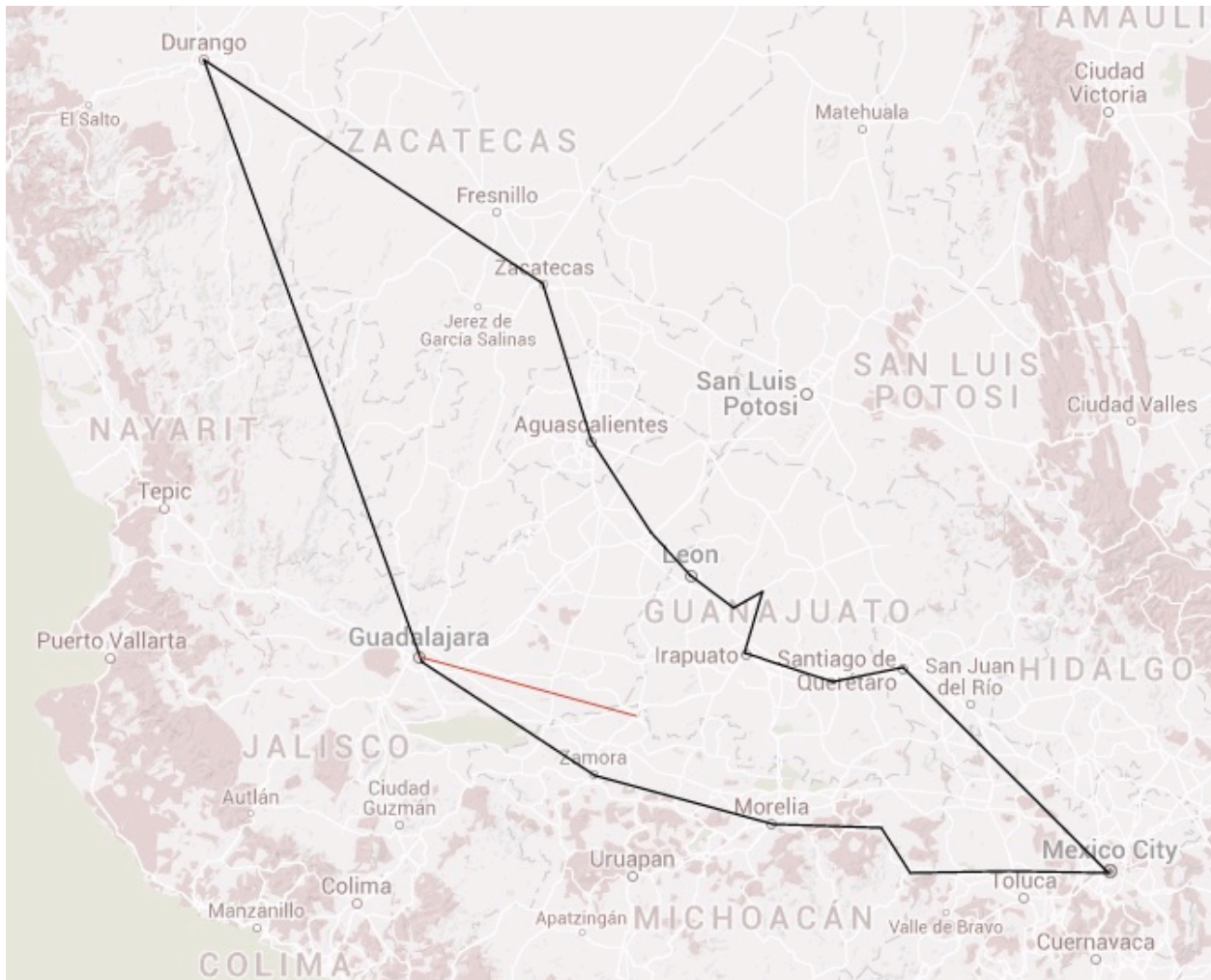
Coquet and Sierra initially traveled northwest from the capital to post and deliver broadsides in Querétaro and the principal population centers of southern Guanajuato, including Celaya, Irapuato, and León. After crossing into Jalisco and visiting Lagos de Moreno, the DIPS agents turned north to Aguascalientes, Zacatecas, and Durango. Durango marked the northernmost point of the agents’ journey; from there, Coquet and Sierra trekked south to Guadalajara, Jalisco. The pair then moved east to neighboring Michoacán, but heavy rains and flooded roads forced them to detour from La Piedad to Zamora. Coquet and Sierra instructed Zamora’s municipal authorities to forward the broadsides to their counterparts in La Piedad as soon as they could, and they then continued east to Morelia, Ciudad Hidalgo, and Zitácuaro before returning to Mexico City on October 19. Once in the capital, the agents informed their superiors that, despite the hiccup when they first entered Michoacán, their assignment had been successfully completed. However, there was an indication that the mission may ultimately have been in vain. In several of the cities they traveled to, Coquet and Sierra received reports that groups of prospective braceros had departed for northern Mexico, presumably to attempt to enter the United States.¹

The DIPS agents’ journey was part of the regulatory effort that President Manuel Ávila Camacho deemed “urgent” when he agreed to participate in the Bracero Program in the summer of 1942.² The assignment also highlighted the skewed nature of bracero emigration: Coquet and Sierra posted and delivered 75 percent of their broadsides in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán, the states that sent the most braceros to the United States.³ But it also showed that the federal government was not managing bracero emigration as effectively as it desired to. Coquet and Sierra had to call upon local-level officials to assist them with their assignment. And prospective braceros seemed more than willing to disregard official Bracero Program-related instructions.

¹ Mario Coquet and Carlos Sierra to C. Lamberto Ortega Peregrina, October 19, 1950, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 103, expediente 1, foja 270.

² Manuel Ávila Camacho, Acuerdo previniendo que se hagan las gestiones necesarias para impartir seguridades a los trabajadores mexicanos que emigren a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, July 23, 1942, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CXXXIII, Número 45, Sección Primera, August 21, 1942, 1-2.

³ Coquet and Sierra posted and delivered a total of 1,440 broadsides. The distribution was as follows: 60 to Querétaro, Querétaro; 60 to Celaya, Guanajuato; 60 to Irapuato, Guanajuato; 120 to Guanajuato, Guanajuato; 60 to Silao, Guanajuato; 120 to León, Guanajuato; 60 to Lagos de Moreno, Jalisco; 120 to Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes; 120 to Zacatecas, Zacatecas; 120 to Durango, Durango; 120 to Guadalajara, Jalisco; 60 to La Piedad, Michoacán; 120 to Morelia, Michoacán; 120 to Ciudad Hidalgo, Michoacán; and 120 to Zitácuaro, Michoacán. As noted in the Introduction, between one-third and one-half of all braceros were from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán.



Map 1.1: Mario Coquet's and Carlos Sierra's October 1950 assignment; red line represents planned but failed visit to La Piedad, Michoacán. Source: Google My Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1QxZQ5tfTixxA_SEbw-Y3Hg6ZkSI&usp=sharing.

How did the Mexican federal government administer the Bracero Program during its 22-year duration (1942-1964) and attempt to regulate departures? What can the missteps and successes of the program's administration tell us about the relationship between the federal government and the state governments? How did federal officials involved in administering the program react to regional and U.S. demands, as well as the actions of the braceros themselves? And what can the program's functioning tell us about the development of migration patterns and the emergence of the Mexican center-west – especially the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán – as the source of the most U.S.-bound Mexican migrants? Though the Bracero Program was not the starting point of U.S.-bound Mexican migration, it would mark the first sustained effort by the Mexican state to actively manage the phenomenon. The program's administration offers a powerful lens through which to examine the impact of federal policies on migration patterns.

In this chapter, I argue that despite the federal government's stated desire to closely regulate the Bracero Program, in the end its role was less active than reactive. Put another way, policy shifts and adjustments were almost always made in response to the demands and concerns of state governments, municipal governments, the braceros themselves, and North American

actors. The federal government initially attempted to take control of recruiting and selecting braceros, but it quickly found itself overwhelmed, and it never gained firm control over the process. As the Bracero Program progressed, the federal government increasingly delegated recruitment and selection responsibilities to its state and municipal counterparts. Given the conventional wisdom about the centralizing and authoritarian nature of the national state post-1940, this move is striking and to a certain extent unexpected.⁴

However, although Mexico City increasingly distanced itself from selecting braceros, it still decided which states would be allowed to distribute contracts, and it also monitored the working and living conditions of braceros, continuously displayed concern about undocumented entries into the United States, and negotiated the bilateral agreement with the U.S. government. This selective centralization is demonstrative of the “soft authoritarianism” described by Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith in their recent work. That is, the federal government’s desire to centralize power during the post-1940 period was often checked by outside pressures and political pragmatism.⁵

This argument builds and expands on past examinations of Mexico’s federal-level administration of the Bracero Program. Deborah Cohen, Richard Craig, Alexandra Délano, David Fitzgerald, and Michael Snodgrass have touched upon the negotiations between Mexico and the United States and the internal debates within the Mexican government in their studies of Mexico-U.S. migration.⁶ I agree with many of these scholars’ conclusions, especially Délano’s and Fitzgerald’s that the Mexican government usually had the weaker position during the bilateral negotiations. However, because none of these scholars have focused exclusively on Mexico’s administration of the Bracero Program, they have not captured the full range of factors – both domestic and international – that shaped the policies enacted by the federal government.

This chapter begins with a brief examination of Mexico’s migration policy prior to the Bracero Program. The question of U.S.-bound migration had long generated debate in Mexico, but official policy had never extended much beyond discouraging prospective migrants from traveling north. The chapter then shifts focus to the federal administration of the Bracero Program during several distinct periods: the program’s first year (1942), when the requirements for migrating were poorly publicized and efforts on the part of braceros to obtain a contract created chaos; 1943 and early 1944, when there was a failed attempt at centralizing bracero recruitment and selection in Mexico City; the spring of 1944, when recruitment and selection responsibilities were partially delegated to the state governments; 1945 to 1948, when the Bracero Program was extended beyond World War II and state and municipal authorities were fully tasked with recruiting braceros; and the program’s final 15 years, 1949 to 1964, when the contract distribution centers were gradually and then entirely shifted from central to northern Mexico.

Managing Migration Prior to the Bracero Program, 1900-1942

⁴ For the traditional interpretation of the 1940-1970 period, see Cosío Villegas, *El sistema político mexicano*; Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis*; Krauze, *La presidencia imperial*; Mabry, “Changing Models of Mexican Politics”; Paz, *Posdata*; and Reyna and Weinert, ed., *Authoritarianism in Mexico*; and Stevens, “Mexico’s PRI.”

⁵ Gillingham and Smith, “The Paradoxes of Revolution,” 1-43.

⁶ Cohen, *Braceros*, 21-28; Craig, *The Bracero Program*; Délano, *Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States*, 83-99; Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants*, 48-50; Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 83-88.

The start of the Bracero Program in 1942 did not mark the beginning of Mexican migration to the United States. There were 103,000 Mexicans living in the United States in 1900. That number increased to 222,000 in 1910, and to 486,000 in 1920. The growing rate of emigration was influenced by two concurrent developments: the political, social, and military turmoil of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, and the U.S. government relaxing the restrictions on the entry of Mexican workers as the rate of Europe-U.S. migration slowed. By 1930, there were at least 641,000 Mexicans living in the United States.⁷

This migratory flow sparked debate and concern in Mexico, but (until the 1930s, at least) few concrete policy actions on the part of the state. Revolutionaries blamed Porfirian policies for the “depopulation of Mexico” since thousands were trying to escape “plunder and tyranny.”⁸ After formally assuming the presidency in 1917, Venustiano Carranza hoped that Mexican emigrants could be encouraged to return home, but there was concern that the U.S. government would interpret any attempts to achieve this end as interference in its internal affairs. At the same time, the Carranza government noted that it could do little to prevent emigration because Article 11 of the 1917 Constitution guaranteed Mexican citizens the right to exit and enter the country as they pleased, provided they had the proper documentation.⁹ During the 1920s, officials were concerned that Mexico would lose valuable manpower while it was trying to rebuild its economy following the turmoil of the previous decade. Consular officials in northern Mexico posted bulletins on U.S.-bound trains warning of the hardships migrants faced in the U.S.; they also wrote newspaper articles detailing the discrimination and economic troubles migrants endured north of the border.¹⁰

The Mexican state took a more active stance in migratory policy in the 1930s, though by then the concern was not the outflow of migrants, but the inflow of those returning from the United States. The Great Depression had halted migration, and 425,000 Mexicans returned to Mexico in the 1930s due to a series of repatriation campaigns launched by the U.S. government; many of these returnees – more than half, according to some estimates – were actually the U.S.-born children of migrants.¹¹ The federal administrations of that decade established a National Committee of Repatriation, Accommodation, and Reincorporation (CNR by its Spanish initials) to resettle returning migrants. As Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso points out in his study of this committee, the CNR launched a series of initiatives, from negotiating discounts with transportation companies to establishing new population centers for those returning and conducting a national fundraising drive.¹² But these programs produced mixed results. The Half-a-Million campaign (a fundraising drive with a goal of raising \$500,000 pesos to aid repatriates) only managed to raise slightly over \$300,000 pesos; repatriate colonies established

⁷ Délano, *Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States*, 66-68. Délano notes that some estimate that the number of Mexicans living in the U.S. in 1930 was 1 million.

⁸ Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 249.

⁹ Délano, *Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States*, 69-70.

¹⁰ Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 249.

¹¹ Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, “The Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States and Mexican Nationalism, 1929-1940,” in *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*, ed. Mark Overmyer-Velázquez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57-58. For the effect of the repatriation campaigns on the Mexican and Mexican-American community in Los Angeles, California, see George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 209-226. For a general treatment of the repatriation campaign’s impact on Mexican and Mexican-American ethnic politics and identity in the U.S., see Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 69-116.

¹² Alanís Enciso, “The Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States and Mexican Nationalism, 1929-1940,” 51-78.

near Acapulco, Guerrero and on the Oaxaca coast failed miserably; and despite efforts to attract repatriates – especially those who had gained valuable experience with advanced irrigation techniques while working in the U.S. – to settle in the northern territory of Baja California, nearly 80 percent of repatriates moved to communities where they had familial or other connections.¹³

After the CNR's failures in the 1930s, Mexican migration policy once again centered on discouraging and preventing Mexicans from leaving for the United States. In March 1942, just five months before the Bracero Program was officially announced, federal Government Undersecretary Adolfo Ruiz Cortines forwarded a Foreign Relations memorandum to the state governors. The memorandum cited a report from the consul in McAllen, Texas, who noted that the citrus and vegetable harvests were already well underway, thus making any migration to the area unnecessary. The consul was also concerned that continuing migration would injure the interests of those Mexicans already living in the United States. Ruiz Cortines asked the governors to widely publicize the memorandum in hopes that it would prevent further outmigration.¹⁴

Thus, the decision to manage, regulate, and even promote the migration of Mexicans to the United States via the Bracero Program was unprecedented, as was the decision to cooperate with the U.S. government on the matter. For decades, the Mexican government seemed to have solely been reacting to U.S. policies: the relaxation of U.S. immigration restrictions in the 1920s led to concern among Mexican officials, while the return of Mexican nationals in the 1930s spurred the creation of the CNR and the repatriation programs discussed above. Now Mexico would collaborate with the U.S.

Agreeing to the Bracero Program marked the Mexican state's acceptance of emigration and its commitment to actively shape it. After four decades of criticizing emigration, discouraging Mexicans from moving north, and attempting to resettle those who returned, the government had now committed itself to "effectively regulating" the departure of its citizens. How the federal state went about that regulation will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

The Beginning of the Bracero Program, 1942

There were no guarantees that Manuel Ávila Camacho and his government would agree to the U.S. request for contract laborers.¹⁵ As noted by Natasha Iskander, a number of federal officials – most notably Government Secretary Miguel Alemán and Agriculture Secretary Marte R. Gómez – opposed the Bracero Program because they feared it would lead to domestic labor shortages; Alemán went so far as to declare that the "rightful place of Mexican labor is at

¹³ Alanís Enciso, "The Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States and Mexican Nationalism," 60, 65-68, 71-75.

¹⁴ Circular Número 2, March 3, 1942, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1942, expediente 6, foja sin número.

¹⁵ John D. Reed, a Bureau of Labor Statistics official stationed in Texas, made the earliest recorded request for Mexican migrant workers. When he formally announced Mexico's participation in the Bracero Program, he noted that the U.S. ambassadorial delegation had also made a formal request. John D. Reed to Honorable Manuel Ávila Camacho, February 11, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folders 1 and 4, fojas sin número.

home.”¹⁶ Michael Snodgrass points out that leftists were unhappy with a policy that, to them, exacerbated Mexico’s economic dependency on the United States.¹⁷ For its part, the Catholic Church worried that braceros would be exposed to Protestantism and vices like gambling and drinking.¹⁸ There were also fears, in both Mexico and the U.S., that braceros would be the victims of discrimination.¹⁹ But as Snodgrass points out, officials like Jaime Torres Bodet (a member of the Foreign Relations delegation that negotiated with the United States) and intellectuals like Manuel Gamio argued that the monies and knowledge acquired by seasonal migrants could spur Mexico’s rural development.²⁰ It was these arguments that convinced Ávila Camacho and his government to agree to the Bracero Program (they also swayed his successors, including Miguel Alemán, to continue the program once World War II ended in 1945). And to allay fears that braceros would be the victims of anti-Mexican discrimination, migrant laborers were not allowed to work in U.S. states – including Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri – that the government feared would harbor a hostile racial environment.²¹

The bracero agreements published in August 1942 offer a glimpse into how the Mexican state wanted to administer the program, and some of its concerns. Each of the federal dependencies Ávila Camacho had consulted after the U.S. government formally requested migrant workers – the Foreign Relations, Government, Labor, and Agriculture Secretariats, as well as the Public Health Department – was given certain administrative responsibilities once the Bracero Program became a reality. The Foreign Relations Secretariat would take the lead in negotiating the agreement with the United States; it was also to safeguard the rights of contracted braceros, including protections against discrimination, guarantees that Mexican nationals would not be drafted for the war effort, and assurances that braceros would not be used to displace other workers. This final responsibility was likely a response to two factors: worries from U.S. labor organizers that braceros would be used as strike breakers, and concern from Mexican consular officials – like the one in McAllen, Texas cited above – that increased migration would adversely impact those Mexicans already settled in the United States.²² The diplomatic corps was expected to receive advice and suggestions from the Labor Secretariat. This latter body was also charged with ensuring that bracero contracts conformed to existing Mexican labor codes, that the departure of Mexican laborers would not interfere with national production, and that labor organizations would cooperate with government efforts. They also had to determine what percentage of bracero earnings would be deposited in a Rural Workers’ Savings Fund. It was the Mexican government’s intention to use this Fund to purchase U.S.-made farm equipment that the braceros would then bring back with them to Mexico. The distribution of these funds and tools would be the domain of the Agriculture Secretariat and the Agricultural Credit Bank. In an echo of the CNR’s 1930s efforts, the Agriculture Secretariat was also expected to develop a colonization plan so that returning migrants could dedicate themselves to domestic production

¹⁶ Natasha Iskander, *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2010), 50.

¹⁷ Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 86.

¹⁸ Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 250.

¹⁹ Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 87; Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 247.

²⁰ Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 86; Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 249-250. For more on Gamio’s attitudes regarding the positive effects of Mexico-United States migration, see Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States*.

²¹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 147.

²² For more on the concerns of U.S. labor organizations, see Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 160-166; Calavita, *Inside the State*, 48, 71, 122-126; and Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed*, 149-155.

(there is no record of this plan ever having come to fruition). For its part, the Government Secretariat was responsible for preventing undocumented entries into the United States, collaborating with regional and municipal governments, and carrying out a publicity campaign about the Bracero Program that would prevent “disturbances” and fully inform prospective braceros about the program’s particulars. Finally, the Public Health Department would make sure that contracted braceros were physically fit.²³

The Government Secretariat was the first of the various ministries to act, upon the successful conclusion of negotiations with the U.S. in the summer of 1942, when Undersecretary Adolfo Ruiz Cortines issued a circular informing the state governors about the agreement. The circular reflected a certain official ambivalence about the Bracero Program: the government wanted the program publicized as widely as possible, but it also wanted to closely control the migratory flow. Ruiz Cortines asked the governors to distribute the circular among the municipal authorities under their jurisdiction and to use whatever other means they deemed convenient so that residents knew of the Bracero Program. But these publicity efforts had to include a warning against attempting to enter the United States without a contract, since both Mexican and U.S. authorities had orders to prevent undocumented entries. In fact, Ruiz Cortines strongly discouraged migration under any terms other than those dictated by the agreement between the Mexican and North American governments.²⁴

Unfortunately, there is little surviving documentary evidence from 1942 as to how the other government agencies charged with administering the Bracero Program fulfilled their responsibilities. This paucity is likely the result of two factors: timing and numbers. The Bracero Program did not become official until late in the U.S. agricultural cycle. This in turn resulted in just over 4,000 contracted braceros entering the United States in the final months of 1942.²⁵ Those interested in receiving a bracero contract that year had to file their application, which included a questionnaire, with the federal Labor Secretariat, though this requirement does not appear to have been publicized, since the only written mention of it is in a private letter sent by a federal official in response to a prospective bracero’s query.²⁶ Contracted braceros were transported to the border via special trains that departed from Mexico City.²⁷ That braceros had to file their request with the federal Labor Secretariat and then leave for the U.S. from Mexico City suggests that, notification of state and municipal governments notwithstanding, the federal government most likely distributed all of these contracts in the federal capital. But there is nothing to indicate where these very early, first-wave braceros were coming from, what requirements they had to meet to be eligible for a contract, or what the exact nature of the arrangement with the railroad companies was.

Despite the admonitions issued by the government and the policy that required contracts from the Labor Secretariat, the summer and autumn of 1942 were marked by a number of reports and letters from border-state officials, as well as frustrated prospective braceros. The Mexican

²³ “Acuerdo preveniendo que se hagan las gestiones necesarias para impartir seguridades a los trabajadores mexicanos que emigren a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica,” 2.

²⁴ Circular Número 463, August 21, 1942, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1942, expediente 28, foja sin número. The state governments acted quickly, as we will see in Chapter Two.

²⁵ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157. There were 4,203 bracero contracts distributed in 1942.

²⁶ Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo to Señor Úrsulo Gómez, August 20, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

²⁷ A.N.T.A. to Gob. Licenciado Silvano Barba González, November 14, 1942, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-1-942, serie Política Estatal y Nacional, caja 160, inventario 3501 bis, foja 7.

consulate in San Diego, California reported that numerous Mexicans had gone to the border after learning of the Bracero Program via the press. Apprehended as soon as they attempted to cross the border without a contract, these men were deported and then banned from entering the United States for at least one year.²⁸ Municipal officials along the border were overwhelmed by prospective braceros. Anacleto Olmos, the municipal president of Nogales, Sonora, wrote to President Ávila Camacho to inform him that hundreds of braceros were in his city asking for food or money to pay for transportation back to their place of origin; Olmos asked the federal government for orders that would help him resolve the situation, but there is no record of a response.²⁹ Diego Peniche Morales, Baja California's government secretary, reported that would-be braceros were requesting food and monetary aid from Tijuana's local government. Tijuana officials also received aid requests from returning braceros, some of whom complained that their U.S. employers paid them less than the wage levels stipulated in their contracts, thus making it difficult to make ends meet. Unlike the Nogales officials, those in Tijuana did not ask the federal government for any direction or advice on the matter.³⁰

The letters would-be braceros sent to Mexico City always included a request for assistance in securing a contract, but they also offer other interesting insights into the situation on the northern border. They reveal, for example, that word of the Bracero Program spread quickly among those interested in migrating. Within one week of the agreement's publication, Alfredo Rodríguez Romo and Luis Mendoza sent letters to President Ávila Camacho from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua and Mexicali, Baja California, respectively, on behalf of large groups of prospective braceros from the "interior" of the country (the Ciudad Juárez group numbered 900, the Mexicali group 400).³¹ One month later, Mariano González wrote to the president from Tijuana on behalf of a group of 50 men from Jalisco who had traveled to the border after learning of the Bracero Program through Mexico City-based newspapers.³² The size of the bracero groups cited in these letters, even if exaggerated, lends credence to officials' claims that hundreds of braceros were gathering at the border. And that these braceros would appeal directly to the president and not the Labor Secretariat – which was officially charged with distributing bracero contracts – demonstrates how poorly the requirements for participation were explained and publicized.

1943 to Early 1944

There was less ambiguity about the requirements and the need to publicize them in 1943 and early 1944. By then, federal officials had learned that they must make the process and requirements for receiving a contract abundantly clear. There were three key refinements in the program's administration. First, all bracero contracts would be distributed exclusively in Mexico

²⁸ Unknown to C. Presidente de la República, October 27, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

²⁹ Anacleto F. Olmos to C. Presidente República, September 9, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

³⁰ Lic. Diego Peniche Morales to C. Secretario Particular del C. Presidente de la República, November 11, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

³¹ Alfredo Rodríguez Romo to C. Presidente de la República, August 22, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, fojas sin número; Luis L. Mendoza to C. Presidente República, August 24, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, fojas sin número.

³² Mariano González to C. General de Div. Dn. Manuel Ávila Camacho, September 23, 1942, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, fojas sin número.

City.³³ Second, those going to Mexico City could not be beneficiaries of the agrarian reform carried out in previous decades.³⁴ And third, they could not be residents of the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, or Michoacán.³⁵ Each of these new requirements for eligibility requires further analysis.

Centralizing the distribution of bracero contracts in Mexico City reflects the federal government's desire to tightly control the migratory process. In an August 1943 letter to Matías Michel – who appears to have been a bracero petitioner writing from Tijuana – federal Labor Secretariat official Sebastián Ortiz wrote that it was not possible to distribute the contracts in another region of the country. In other words, a worker already living quite close to the border would have to go to Mexico City in order to obtain a contract, before he could return to the border. Ortiz explained (in the face of what must have seemed to the petitioner, Michel, to be monumental inefficiency and even prejudice against those living near the border) that the Mexican state had only intervened in the migratory process according to the parameters established by the accords between the Mexican and U.S. governments, and that its ultimate goal was to make sure that Mexican nationals were “duly protected” when they headed north.³⁶ Ortiz's language in this letter echoes that of Adolfo Ruiz Cortines from the previous year, since he also stressed the importance of acquiring a contract, especially so that migrants could claim certain protections and guarantees.

Moving the contract distribution center to Mexico City could have also been an attempt to avoid further chaos at the U.S. border. As discussed above, the summer and autumn of 1942 saw prospective braceros flood border cities like Ciudad Juárez, Nogales, and Tijuana in hopes that they could secure a contract there. When they could not cross the border, they either petitioned federal authorities for a contract or attempted to enter the United States illegally. But the shift to Mexico City did not stop would-be braceros from heading to the border, as letters from there continued to arrive in Mexico City. In one letter, Juan Ortiz – who wrote from Ciudad Juárez on behalf of a large group from central Mexico – asked President Ávila Camacho to either sanction their entry into the U.S. or provide resources for a trip to Mexico City so they could get their contract there.³⁷ That Ortiz would broach the possibility of returning to Mexico City indicates that his group was aware that the contracts were being distributed there, but that they still ignored official policy and headed directly to Ciudad Juárez.

To make matters worse for the federal government, the capital city now faced many of the same problems described by border city officials the previous year. Local residents and officials expressed dismay at the living conditions of prospective braceros in Mexico City, and they held the federal government responsible. Francisco Escalante, a local resident, noted that contract-seekers were sleeping on the sidewalks near the National Stadium, where the Labor Secretariat was distributing contracts. He suggested that they be allowed to sleep in the stadium

³³ Lic. Sebastián Ortiz H. to Sr. Matías C. Michel, August 25, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

³⁴ Lic. Carlos Herrera Marmolejo to C. Presidente Municipal, June 12, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 44-45.

³⁵ Lic. Luis Padilla Nervo to C. Gobernador del Estado de Michoacán, October 20, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 108-109.

³⁶ Lic. Sebastián Ortiz H. to Sr. Matías C. Michel, August 25, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

³⁷ Juan Ortiz to Presidente de la República, June 21, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

proper so as to avoid an “inhumane spectacle.”³⁸ Salvador Flores Rodríguez, the secretary general of the National Union for the Defense of Rural Workers, also noted that would-be migrants were sleeping on the streets near the stadium, and he claimed that this was a result of the Labor Secretariat’s slow pace and inefficiency while distributing contracts. Flores Rodríguez then mentioned that those that did not get a contract were now wandering through Mexico City, without food or shelter, and he asked President Ávila Camacho to remedy the “lamentable spectacle” by ordering the Labor Secretariat to help these individuals.³⁹

Accounts like those of Escalante and Flores Rodríguez were corroborated by the braceros gathered in Mexico City. One individual, who signed his letter as “a spokesman,” wrote to President Ávila Camacho on behalf of over 2,000 prospective braceros gathered near the stadium. The letter described a similar situation: prospective migrants were sleeping on the streets and had very little access to food (a small fruit stand was near the stadium, but nothing else). The spokesman also noted that the Labor Secretariat only distributed 200 bracero contracts per day at the stadium, since those in charge worked for a mere one to two hours in the morning. Because of this, there was always a mad scramble to get in line when the Labor officials arrived, making it difficult for the police to impose order. The spokesman asked the president to increase the number of stations distributing contracts at the stadium, which would alleviate the situation of those waiting for a contract and reduce the number of physical altercations between the police and prospective braceros.⁴⁰

It was also discovered that individuals, including Labor Secretariat officials working at the National Stadium, were violating established policy by selling official and falsified bracero contracts. In January 1944, an unnamed DIPS agent reported that Felipe Sotomayor Olvera, the commanding officer of one of the police groups assigned to the stadium, had apprehended Raúl Álvaro Zenil Cadena, who was accompanying 18 prospective braceros, each of whom had given him money to acquire their contracts for them. When he was searched, police discovered that Zenil Cadena had a letter from Roberto Atwood, an attorney working for the Labor Secretariat; in the letter, Atwood asked Lucano Pineda, one of the Labor officials stationed at the stadium, to attend personally to Zenil Cadena and his group of braceros.⁴¹ Later that month, another DIPS agent reported that “unscrupulous” individuals were taking advantage of “humble, hungry, and miserable” prospective braceros and making as much as \$50,000 pesos from the sale of forged documents.⁴²

The situation at the National Stadium reached a nadir on February 15, 1944, when a small disturbance escalated into a violent confrontation. At noon that day, an unnamed former federal legislator and four prospective braceros he was aiding were allowed into the stadium without having to wait in line. Those who had been waiting – 2,000, according to the DIPS agents who reported on the incident – grew angry and forced their way into the stadium to complain about the preference given to the lucky four. With the police officers patrolling the stadium

³⁸ Francisco Escalante to Presidente de la República, June 7, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

³⁹ Salvador Flores Rodríguez to Presidente República, January 14, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁴⁰ Un portavoz to Sr. Presidente de la República, March 17, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁴¹ El Inspector #67 to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, January 5, 1944, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 782, expediente 4, foja 2.

⁴² IPS 38 to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigación Política y Social, January 18, 1944, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 782, expediente 4, foja 23.

overwhelmed, Labor Secretariat officials Ángel Avaytua González and Manuel Hernández intervened and ordered the frustrated braceros to exit the stadium. When the braceros refused, Avaytua González and Hernández pistol-whipped them. According to the braceros, once they had been forced back through the doors, the Labor officials opened fire with their weapons; three braceros – Aurelio de la Rosa Baoz of Zacatecas, Pedro Andrade of the State of Mexico, and Eulogio Rodríguez of Mexico City – were wounded, although their injuries were deemed non-life threatening. Once the dust settled, 300 braceros, including the wounded, marched to the Labor Secretariat to protest. Labor Undersecretary Jorge Medellín greeted them there, and he assured them that the responsible parties would be removed from their posts and “severely punished” (there is no record of what consequences, if any, Avaytua González and Hernández suffered).⁴³

Thus, the federal government’s efforts to control the migratory process in 1943 and early 1944 failed as dismally as they had in 1942. Mexico City became home to a population of indigent braceros, some officials were illegally trafficking in bracero contracts, violent clashes were occurring at the National Stadium, and thousands of migrants ignored official protocols, headed to the border, and entered the U.S. without a contract (U.S. authorities apprehended 8,189 undocumented Mexican agricultural workers in 1943 and 26,689 in 1944).⁴⁴ Government officials were well aware of these failures, or, to be more precise, of the failure of centralizing bracero recruitment in Mexico City. In his August 1943 letter to Matías Michel, Labor official Sebastián Ortiz wrote that the number of aspiring braceros in the capital exceeded the number of laborers needed in the U.S.; as a result, going to Mexico City in search of a contract would be useless and possibly dangerous, since they would be exposed to “serious discomforts and deprivations.”⁴⁵ Ortiz said the same thing in a reply to a group of petitioners writing from the northern state of Nuevo León, and he also took this opportunity to stress that going to Mexico City did not guarantee them a contract.⁴⁶ Ortiz’s Labor colleague Luis Fernández del Campo used the exact same language – “discomforts,” “deprivations,” the possibility that he would not get a contract – when discouraging petitioner J. José Terriquez Martínez from going to the capital. Fernández del Campo apparently did not take notice that Terriquez Martínez was already in the capital, indicating that by September 1943, the date of this letter, the federal government had a standardized response to any queries about bracero contracts.⁴⁷ These letters’ emphasis on “deprivations” and “discomforts” show that the Mexican government was well aware of the “lamentable spectacle” on the streets near the National Stadium, and were hopeful that discouraging braceros from traveling to Mexico City could mitigate it.

What of the second requirement set by the federal government in 1943, which banned ejidatarios (beneficiaries of the agrarian reform) from receiving bracero contracts? How did the government attempt to enforce this measure? Was the attempt successful? More importantly, why was the restriction put in place? None of the documentary evidence available for 1942

⁴³ Carlos Saavedra, PS #2, and Roberto Ramos C. to C. Jefe del Departamento de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, February 15, 1944, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 782, expediente 4, fojas 57-58.

⁴⁴ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

⁴⁵ Lic. Sebastián Ortiz H. to Sr. Matías C. Michel, August 25, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁴⁶ Lic. Sebastián Ortiz H. to Sres. Adrián González e Ibarra y demás firmantes, July 28, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁴⁷ Lic. Luis Fernández del Campo to J. José Terriquez Martínez, September 3, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

mentions this restriction, so it only went into effect in 1943 – although it remained in effect for the remainder of the Bracero Program.

The government's official position was that the ban on ejidatarios was meant to safeguard domestic agricultural production.⁴⁸ But since there was no proscription on non-ejidatario farmers, the ban must have had a political component connected to the central place of the ejido and agrarian reform in revolutionary ideology and policy.⁴⁹ Between 1915 and 1940, the Mexican state had distributed over 30 million hectares of ejido lands (13.5 percent of the national territory) to over 1.5 million ejidatarios, a process that peaked during Lázaro Cárdenas's 1934-1940 presidency. Although Manuel Ávila Camacho slowed the pace of the agrarian reform when he succeeded Cárdenas in 1940, the Mexican state still touted the distribution of lands as one of the greatest accomplishments of the revolutionary period.⁵⁰ More importantly, several champions of the agrarian reform and the ejido remained active in Ávila Camacho's administration, most notably federal Agriculture and Development Secretary Marte R. Gómez, who had opposed the Bracero Program in 1942. Gómez had long thought that the collective ejido was the ideal way to distribute land to rural workers, and as governor of the northeastern state of Tamaulipas in the late 1930s he sanctioned the distribution of nearly 650,000 hectares of ejido land to over 18,000 ejidatarios.⁵¹ Given Gómez's political history, it is easy to understand why he and like-minded individuals would have been reluctant to embrace the Bracero Program: sanctioning the migration of rural workers would have been tantamount to declaring that Mexico had not yet resolved its agrarian question. Once the Bracero Program became a reality, banning ejidatarios – the segment of the population that had supposedly benefited from the agrarian reform – from leaving the country was seen by men like Gómez as crucial to preserving one of the revolution's crowning achievements. If ejidatarios left in droves, the ejidos might collapse due to a lack of workers. Thus, both protecting the idea of the ejido and protecting the reality of ejido production were motives for banning ejidatarios from becoming braceros.

Whatever the mix of motivations, however, the federal government found the ban on ejidatarios difficult to implement. A June 1943 memo from federal Labor Secretary Francisco Trujillo Gurría that was then circulated to state and municipal governments shows some of the problems that the federal government faced when trying to distinguish ejidatarios from other applicants for bracero contracts. Trujillo Gurría noted that prospective braceros were questioned

⁴⁸ Lic. Carlos Herrera Marmolejo to C. Presidente Municipal, June 12, 1943, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 44-45.

⁴⁹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Segundo Censo Agrícola Ganadero de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1940: Resumen General* (México: 1951), 32, 146-147, 169-170, 201, 230, 236; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Segundo Censo Ejidal de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1940: Resumen General* (México: 1949), 165, 171-172. According to the 1940 Agrarian and Ejido Censuses, 21.4 percent of the country's ejido-produced maize (320,128,164 kilograms out of 1,493,394,678), 23.4 percent of non-ejido-produced maize (349,905,632 kilograms out of 1,495,647,405), 32.2 percent of ejido-produced wheat (75,593,505 kilograms out of 234,964,208), and 14.7 percent of non-ejido-produced wheat (27,790,542 kilograms out of 189,169,900) was harvested in the region.

⁵⁰ *Estadísticas históricas de México, Tomo I*, 321. Cárdenas distributed 18,786,131 hectares to 728,847 beneficiaries in 10,975 communities. Ávila Camacho distributed 7,287,697 hectares to 157,816 beneficiaries in 3,575 communities. For an introduction into how the post-1940 Mexican state continuously refashioned itself as "revolutionary" and how it appropriated past policies (including the agrarian reform), see Joseph, Rubenstein, and Zolov, "Assembling the Fragments," 3-22.

⁵¹ Michael A. Ervin, "Marte R. Gómez of Tamaulipas: Governing Agrarian Revolution," in *State Governors of the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1952: Portraits in Conflict, Courage, and Corruption*, ed. Jürgen Buchenau and William H. Beezley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 123-124, 129. The Gómez administration distributed 649,465 hectares of land to 18,640 beneficiaries.

about whether or not they were ejidatarios when applying for a contract. But, despite the meticulous nature of the questioning process, some ejidatarios had indeed received bracero contracts (Trujillo Gurría does not specify exactly how the Labor Secretariat discovered the braceros' duplicity). To remedy the situation, the Labor Secretariat decided that any prospective braceros had to present a certificate from their local government stating that they were not ejidatarios. Trujillo Gurría felt that this policy would only be successful with the cooperation of all levels of government, the help of Agrarian Committees, and the "honest behavior" of the municipal authorities issuing the required certificates.⁵² The new rule went into effect in July 1943, one month after the Labor Secretary sent out his memo.⁵³

This new policy also proved difficult to enforce due in part to the lack of "honest behavior" from some municipal governments. Only three weeks after prospective braceros were first required to present certificates proving their status as non-ejidatarios, Guanajuato Labor official Crescenciano Aguilera contacted Michoacán Governor Félix Ireta with a complaint. The municipal president of Pénjamo, a municipality on the border with Michoacán, had learned that ejidatarios from his jurisdiction had crossed into the neighboring Michoacán municipalities of La Piedad, Numarán, and Penjamillo, and that the authorities there had given them documents stating that they were eligible for bracero contracts. This negated the efforts of Pénjamo's municipal and agrarian authorities to prevent local ejidatarios from abandoning their lands to work in the U.S. as braceros. Pénjamo's municipal president wanted Governor Ireta informed of the irregularities in hopes that he would remedy the situation and prevent Guanajuato ejidatarios from taking advantage of the "kindness" of Michoacán's municipal authorities.⁵⁴ Michoacán Government Secretary Luis Marín Pérez responded by telling Guanajuato authorities that Governor Ireta disavowed the actions of the municipal authorities accused of ignoring the federal Labor Secretariat's dictates, and he also asked to be informed if they continued.⁵⁵ Marín Pérez then told the municipal presidents of La Piedad, Numarán, and Penjamillo that they would be held responsible if their governments continued issuing bracero eligibility certificates to rural workers who did not live in their jurisdictions.⁵⁶

In a separate letter to Governor Ireta, Crescenciano Aguilera also expressed concern that the lax enforcement of the ban on ejidatarios migrating as braceros was adversely impacting Guanajuato's economy due to the depopulation of the state's agricultural zones.⁵⁷ Jalisco Governor Marcelino García Barragán expressed similar concerns that same year. In a report, García Barragán noted that, with the goal of protecting the state's "productive activities," his government "discretely but effectively" aided a campaign aimed at preventing the uncontrolled

⁵² Lic. Carlos Herrera Marmolejo to C. Presidente Municipal, June 12, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 44-45.

⁵³ Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurría to C. Gobernador del Estado, June 26, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, foja 73.

⁵⁴ Lic. Crescenciano Aguilera to C. Gobernador del Estado, July 26, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 42-43.

⁵⁵ Lic. Luis Marín Pérez to Ciudadano Mayor de Gobierno, August 2, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, foja 48.

⁵⁶ Lic. Luis Marín Pérez to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, August 9, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 50, 51, and 54.

⁵⁷ Lic. Crescenciano Aguilera and Ing. Ramón Castañeda M. to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, July 27, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 52-53.

departure of Jalisco braceros (García Barragán did not specify the exact nature of this campaign).⁵⁸

It was probably to alleviate these concerns about uncontrolled departures that the federal government put in place the third adjustment of bracero policy in 1943: the ban on all residents of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán, not just ejidatarios, from migrating as braceros. This proscription went into effect in the summer of that year, and the decision was apparently made by President Ávila Camacho himself. The earliest mention of the ban in the documentary evidence is an August 2 letter from Governor Marcelino García Barragán to Jalisco's municipal presidents. In the letter, García Barragán noted that he had corresponded with federal Labor Secretariat officials and been told by them that there were enough Jalisco braceros in Mexico City to satisfy that state's quota for the year; he then instructed the municipal presidents to stop issuing the documents necessary for bracero contracts and to tell rural workers interested in migrating that they would have to wait at least until 1944 to do so.⁵⁹

Word of the proscription spread quickly. Just five days after García Barragán wrote to Jalisco's municipal presidents, José Terriquez Martínez, a prospective bracero who had traveled to Mexico City, mentioned the three-state ban in a petition he sent to J. Jesús González Gallo, Manuel Ávila Camacho's chief of staff.⁶⁰ Roberto Amorós, another member of the presidential staff, also mentioned a presidential decision when he forwarded Terriquez Martínez's petition to Labor Secretary Trujillo Gurría on August 10.⁶¹ And in a March 1944 letter, Michoacán official Manuel Cárdenas informed the state's municipal presidents that the presidential decree that banned Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers from migrating as braceros remained in effect.⁶²

None of the documents that refer to the decree sheds light on why these three states were singled out, and the decree itself could not be located in the archives. But the likelihood is that Guanajuatenses, Jaliscienses, and Michoacanos had already received too many contracts, and that merely preventing ejidatarios from migrating was seen as insufficient to staunch the flow of emigration from these states. There were 118,471 bracero contracts distributed to Mexican men during the Bracero Program's first three years, and 52.4 percent of these contracts went to workers from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán (19,848 to Guanajuato; 8,202 to Jalisco; and 34,069 to Michoacán).⁶³ According to the 1940 Population Census, 17.8 percent of Mexican men of prime working age (between the ages of 20 and 44) lived in these three states.⁶⁴ This

⁵⁸ C. Marcelino García Barragán, Informe Circunstancial, 1943, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-1-943, serie Política Estatal y Nacional, caja 160, inventario 3504, foja 9.

⁵⁹ Gral. Brig. Marcelino García Barragán to C. Presidente Municipal, August 2, 1943, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1943, caja 13, foja sin número.

⁶⁰ José Terriquez Martínez to Sr. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, August 7, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁶¹ Lic. Roberto Amorós G. to C. Secretario del Trabajo y Previsión Social, August 10, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁶² Manuel M. Cárdenas to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, March 14, 1944, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 2, foja 5.

⁶³ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157; Cross and Sandos, *Across the Border*, 44.

⁶⁴ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Resumen General* (México, D.F.: 1943), 1-3. There were 3,246,330 men between 20 and 44 in Mexico; 579,043 of these men lived in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán.

means that less than one-fifth of Mexico's eligible population was receiving over half of the bracero contracts.⁶⁵

Whatever the motives behind it, the ban on bracero contracts for center-western residents proved just as difficult to enforce as the other Bracero Program requirements. In October 1943, federal Labor Secretariat official Luis Padilla Nervo wrote to Michoacán Governor Félix Ireta to inform him that prospective braceros had found a loophole in the new policy: the proscription did not apply to residents of Michoacán who had been negatively impacted by the Parícutin volcano, which first erupted in February 1943 and affected lands in the Sierra Purépecha region of the state (Chapter Two examines this policy in more detail). Labor officials started noticing irregularities in documents presented by rural workers claiming to be from Los Reyes, one of the affected municipalities. Padilla Nervo informed Governor Ireta that the signature of Los Reyes's municipal president varied in the documents presented in Mexico City, which led officials there to suspect that the signatures were forged. When questioned, several would-be braceros from Los Reyes admitted that they were actually residents of Guanajuato or Jalisco whose previous attempts to secure a bracero contract had been rebuffed; they also admitted that they had paid anywhere from \$2 to \$10 pesos for the forged documents.⁶⁶

Not every prospective bracero from the center-west resorted to subterfuge to acquire a bracero contract; some simply went to Mexico City and personally appealed to the federal government in hopes that this would lead to them being exempted from the proscription.⁶⁷ But the fact that some rural workers – whether ejidatarios or residents of Guanajuato, Jalisco, or Michoacán – were able to circumvent established policies, coupled with the chaotic situation at the Mexico City contracting center and at the U.S. border, demonstrates that the Mexican government was unable to control the bracero migratory process as it wished.

Late 1944

Faced with these various difficulties in its efforts to control migration through the Bracero Program, the federal government again reassessed its policies in the spring of 1944. In a March 1 telegram, federal Government Secretary Miguel Alemán informed the state governors that all bracero recruitment was temporarily on hold. As a result, prospective braceros should abstain from traveling to Mexico City, since they would only expose themselves to harm and cause problems in the capital. Alemán, in a demonstration of the state's continued desire to control the migratory process, also warned that any individuals claiming to be official recruiters were operating outside the limits of the law. He then requested that his telegram be forwarded to municipal authorities, and that it be publicized via the press, radio, and broadsides.⁶⁸ Michoacán

⁶⁵ There is no record of what the age requirements were during the initial years of the Bracero Program. But beginning in the mid-1940s, prospective braceros had to be between the ages of 20 and 50. Francisco Cristóbal Ruiz and Ramón Ávila Rincón, *Importante a los Trabajadores de este Municipio*, April 7, 1947, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 53.

⁶⁶ Lic. Luis Padilla Nervo to C. Gobernador del Estado de Michoacán, October 20, 1943, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 108-112.

⁶⁷ J. José Terriquez Martínez to Sr. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, August 7, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 1, foja sin número.

⁶⁸ Lic. Miguel Alemán to C. Gob. del Edo., March 1, 1944, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 2, foja 3.

state officials forwarded Alemán's telegram to their municipal counterparts the day after the Government Secretary sent it.⁶⁹

Two months after Government Secretary Alemán announced the halt in bracero recruitment, the federal government made a significant change in how braceros would be recruited. The Ávila Camacho administration decided that it had found "more adequate locations" – to borrow a term used in an April 1944 letter written by Mexico City residents unhappy with the National Stadium Contracting Center – at which to distribute contracts, thus beginning the federal government's process of divorcing itself from direct recruitment.⁷⁰ Those interested in migrating to the United States would now go through a "pre-contracting" screening process in select cities throughout the country. One of the cities chosen was Irapuato, Guanajuato, one of the principal urban centers in the Lerma-Chapala Basin (other cities selected were San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas, Zacatecas).⁷¹ Beginning in early June, agents of the Mexican Labor Secretariat and the U.S. Department of Agriculture would screen prospective Guanajuato braceros in Irapuato, thus negating the need for "dangerous concentrations" of workers in Mexico City. Those selected in Irapuato would eventually have to travel to the federal capital. But that journey, which would be fully paid for, would be for the sole purpose of undergoing a medical exam before officially being given a contract; once that was done, the braceros could leave for the United States.⁷² Even though the shift of recruiting responsibilities was only partial, it would spare Mexico City from some of the worst problems associated with the National Stadium Contracting Center.

The specific workings of the Pre-Contracting Centers, particularly the Irapuato one, as well as the concerns of state officials and problems that arose there will be examined more closely in Chapter Two. But there is one thing that should be noted here: the braceros selected at these centers had to be from the state where the centers were located. This meant that the proscription on Guanajuatenses migrating as braceros had been lifted, since only workers from that state could receive contracts at the Irapuato Pre-Contracting Center. Whatever concerns federal officials had had in late 1943 and early 1944 about too many workers leaving Guanajuato were outweighed by the desire to ameliorate the problems at the Mexico City Contracting Center.

Although Guanajuato braceros were allowed to leave the country again, the ban on Jalisco and Michoacán braceros remained in effect. But just as in 1943, when braceros took advantage of the exemption for regions affected by the Parícutín volcano, Jalisco and Michoacán migrants found another loophole in official policy: provisional passports, travel documents that were issued by state governments. In late July, Jalisco Governor Marcelino García Barragán contacted his Guanajuato counterpart Ernesto Hidalgo to complain that residents of San Diego de

⁶⁹ Manuel M. Cárdenas to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, March 2, 1944, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 2, foja 4.

⁷⁰ Summary of April 26, 1944 letter from Estela Merino, Sara Vázquez Batista y demás firmantes to C. Presidente, May 15, 1944, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, foja sin número.

⁷¹ Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Presidente Municipal, May 26, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número; El Inspector PS-54 to Lic. Eduardo Ampudia V., May 24, 1944, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 91, expediente 5, foja 59; El Inspector Comisionado (37) to C. Lic. Eduardo Ampudia, May 22, 1944, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 97, expediente 22, fojas 147-150.

⁷² Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Presidente Municipal, May 26, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número; Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Presidente Municipal, July 20, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 24, fojas sin número.

Alejandría, a municipality that borders Guanajuato, were crossing state lines and acquiring provisional passports there that would allow them to travel to the United States. García Barragán, believing that this was an attempt to evade the restriction on Jalisco workers from migrating north, asked Hidalgo's government to cease issuing provisional passports to Jalisco residents.⁷³ Guanajuato Government Secretary Fausto Villagómez denied García Barragán's claim, and asked that the municipal president of San Diego de Alejandría provide definitive proof that residents of his jurisdiction had received provisional passports in Guanajuato.⁷⁴

The federal government had expressed concerns over the matter of provisional passports before the dispute between Guanajuato and Jalisco. In June, Foreign Relations Secretary Ezequiel Padilla contacted the state governors to ask them to cooperate with federal efforts to curb irregular departures by braceros using provisional passports. Padilla asked that state authorities question provisional passport applicants as to the exact nature of their desired voyage. And if at any time state authorities suspected that an applicant was a bracero attempting to travel to the United States without a contract, Padilla wanted them to inform the applicant about the protections and advantages a contract granted them. It was hoped that this would dissuade workers from leaving without official sanction.⁷⁵

Two months after Secretary Padilla sent his letter, the federal Government Secretariat weighed in on the matter of braceros using provisional passports to bypass official migratory policy. In an August 22 communiqué later circulated by state officials, the federal dependency discussed the disruptions undocumented bracero entries into the United States had caused. These entries had been facilitated by braceros taking advantage of the "good faith" of local governments and applying for provisional passports under false pretenses, as well as lax security in certain areas of the border. Mexican and U.S. federal officials discussed the issue, and together they developed a new strategy for preventing undocumented departures. This strategy would require cooperation between federal, state, and municipal government agencies.⁷⁶

The new strategy hinged on three points. First, state governments were to restrict the number of provisional passports they issued. Any applications for this type of document had to be thoroughly vetted, and if applicants were suspected of wanting to travel to the United States to work there, state officials were to discourage them from leaving. Second, border state governors and municipal officials were asked to help Migratory Offices establish an effective surveillance system across the entire border. Third, all state governors were asked to conduct an intense publicity campaign aimed at dissuading rural workers who might be considering entering the U.S. without a bracero contract. This campaign would be designed to alert them to the inconveniences of leaving the country without the guarantees and protections afforded by bracero contracts; the campaign also had to include a warning that, by request of the Mexican

⁷³ Gral. Brig. Marcelino García Barragán and Lic. José Andrade González to C. Gobernador Constl. del Estado, July 29, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.21.03, año 1944, expediente 17, foja sin número.

⁷⁴ Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Gobernador de Jalisco, August 5, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.21.03, año 1944, expediente 17, foja sin número.

⁷⁵ Ezequiel Padilla to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, June 7, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.21.03, año 1944, expediente 18, foja sin número; Manuel M. Cárdenas to C. Presidente Municipal, June 16, 1944, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 2, foja 12.

⁷⁶ Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, October 10, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 33, fojas sin número; Lic. Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, October 18, 1944, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, fondo Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 2, fojas 13-14.

government, U.S. authorities had doubled their patrols on the border and would deport anyone who crossed the border without a bracero contract.⁷⁷

These new measures ultimately proved ineffective. In November 1944, DIPS agent Vicente Cervantes reported from Tijuana that an indeterminate number of Mexican workers were entering the United States without bracero contracts through the region between Mexicali, Baja California and San Luis, Sonora. Cervantes had received unconfirmed reports that the braceros were being brought to the border by false labor contractors promising well-paid jobs to workers from the interior of the country; the braceros themselves claimed to be there of their own accord because they were tired of waiting for their contracts in Mexico City. Although Cervantes could not determine how many workers had already entered the U.S., he reported that there were at least 4,000 would-be braceros gathered on the Mexican side of the border between Mexicali and San Luis, and that those who managed to cross the border were arrested and deported before they could even work a single day (the quick deportations do indicate that, at least at this time, the United States was complying with its commitment to limit illegal entries). Migration officials stationed in Mexicali – acting on federal Government Secretariat orders – had sent personnel to patrol the region between that city and San Luis, but approximately 10 to 20 Mexicans were being deported to Mexicali every day.⁷⁸ By year's end, U.S. immigration authorities had apprehended 26,289 undocumented Mexican agricultural workers, triple the number detained in 1943.⁷⁹

1945-1948

As the calendar turned to 1945, the federal government made yet another adjustment to Bracero Program policy. On February 14, federal Labor Secretariat official Luis Fernández del Campo informed the state governors that, to avoid the multiple harms caused by braceros traveling to Mexico City, the contracts would no longer be distributed in the federal capital. Instead, the contracts would now be given out throughout the country, with exact locations to be announced later.⁸⁰ Fernández del Campo's message also included a packet of broadsides (dated February 8) to post in municipal offices and train stations; the broadsides informed braceros about the policy change and warned them that any trips to Mexico City to gain a bracero contract would be futile.⁸¹

On the surface, this does not appear to be a drastic policy shift. After all, Pre-Contracting Centers had been established in cities like Irapuato, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas in the summer of 1944. But, as noted above, these new centers were only for preliminary screenings;

⁷⁷ Lic. Fuasto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, October 10, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 33, fojas sin número; Lic. Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, October 18, 1944, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, fondo Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 2, fojas 13-14.

⁷⁸ Vicente Cervantes C. to C. Lic. Eduardo Ampudia V., November 21, 1944, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 92, expediente 10, foja 134.

⁷⁹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

⁸⁰ Lic. Luis Fernández del Campo to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado Libre y Soberano de Guanajuato, February 14, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 44, foja sin número; Lic. Luis Fernández del Campo to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado Libre y Soberano de Michoacán, February 14, 1945, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 18.

⁸¹ Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, Aviso a los Braceros, February 8, 1945, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1945, caja 44, foja sin número.

braceros still had to travel to Mexico City to undergo a medical examination and receive their contract. When the federal government announced in early 1945 that bracero contracts would only be distributed away from Mexico City, it was separating itself from the process of recruiting and selecting braceros. Federal officials still staffed the Contracting Centers and decided where they would be located.⁸² But recruitment and selection responsibilities now fell entirely to the governments of the states where the contracting centers were located. Two of the governments that would now perform these duties were those of Guanajuato and Michoacán, since contracting centers were established in Irapuato and Uruapan, a central Michoacán city in the Sierra Purépecha.⁸³



Map 1.2: Contracting Centers in central Mexico. Source: Google My Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1fPcdfph6LPL5j8NGk29bY5fDprg&usp=sharing>.

The establishment of the Irapuato and Uruapan Contracting Centers is also indicative of another significant change in federal Bracero Program policy: because these Contracting Centers could only recruit braceros from the states where they were located, this meant that center-western rural workers could once again become braceros. In fact, their departures were outright encouraged, since at times the federal government came to rely entirely on the center-west to fulfill its bracero quotas. In early 1947, bracero contracts were only distributed in the center-western states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Querétaro; agricultural workers from other states were ordered to stay at home because they were not eligible for contracts.⁸⁴

Why this dramatic change? Why, after banning nearly all Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers from migrating as braceros in late 1943 and early 1944, did the federal government completely switch gears to favor braceros from these states? Were federal officials

⁸² Cohen, *Braceros*, 98-103. North American federal officials also worked at the Contracting Centers.

⁸³ Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, February 14, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, foja sin número; Lic. Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Secretario del Trabajo, February 12, 1945, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 13-14.

⁸⁴ Héctor Pérez Martínez to C. Gobernador del Estado, April 18, 1947, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 237.

simply no longer concerned that too many workers were leaving the region? Or were there other factors at play?

There was one practical reason for the decision: the pattern of the rail network that was used to transport braceros to the U.S. border. The population centers west of Mexico City, including Irapuato and Uruapan, were directly connected via rail to northern Mexico and the border region.⁸⁵ This meant that center-western braceros could be transported to the United States relatively easily. Mexican federal officials certainly took that factor into account when deciding the placement of the Contracting Centers. In April 1947, Michoacán Government Secretary Luis Manuel Moreno told the state's Health Services Director that Uruapan had been chosen as the contracting site because both the Mexican and U.S. federal governments felt it had the best rail infrastructure to suit their needs.⁸⁶

However, the decision to sanction the departure of center-western braceros cannot be wholly explained by the state of Mexico's transportation infrastructure. The decision was also influenced by a complex mix of political, agrarian, ecological, social, institutional, and cultural factors in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán that fueled demand for bracero contracts there; this demand swayed the federal government to make the conscious political decision to funnel bracero contracts to these states.⁸⁷ The particular mix in each state will be examined broadly in Chapters Two and Three and in depth in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. But briefly, authorities became less hostile to allowing the departure of center-western braceros than they had been in previous years because of a particularly strong and effective conservative Catholic opposition to the agrarian reform of the 1920s and 1930s and because of the agrarian reform's structural flaws. The conservative Catholic opposition was so strong that many rural workers in the region refused land grants or actively undermined the establishment of ejidos. As a result, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán had a substantial number of non-ejidatarios – the very type of rural workers that were eligible to migrate as braceros – whose allegiance to both the revolutionary national government and the state governments could be seen as questionable. At the same time, many ejidatarios had been granted insufficient or poor-quality lands.

The agrarian conflicts and pressures of the 1920s and 1930s persisted into the years of the Bracero Program, meaning that federal officials may have come to think of emigration as a means of removing truculent constituents and easing agrarian pressures. The federal government openly declared that it wanted to restore and maintain peace in the center-western countryside. In early 1948, Mario Sousa, the head of the federal Agrarian Department, wrote to state-level officials in Guanajuato and Jalisco to tell them that increased agricultural production required “security and tranquility” in rural areas. To that end, state authorities were instructed to monitor the countryside and ensure that the property rights of both ejidatarios and private smallholders were respected and that land invasions and agrarian conflicts be minimized.⁸⁸ It is not clear if

⁸⁵ John Coatsworth, *Growth Against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981), 34.

⁸⁶ Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno to C. Jefe de los Servicios Coordinados de Salubridad y Asistencia en Michoacán, April 14, 1947, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 62.

⁸⁷ Lic. Benito Coquet to C. Gobernador del Estado, March 5, 1946, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1946, expediente 3, fojas sin número.

⁸⁸ Lic. Mario Sousa to C. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, January 30, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 7, foja sin número; Lic. J. Jesús Castorena to C. Presidente Municipal, February 6, 1948, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1948, expediente 7, foja sin número. Governor Castorena of Guanajuato forwarded Sousa's letter to the state's municipal presidents.

Michoacán officials received the same message, though it is likely that they did. Even if they did not, it is apparent that the federal government was concerned about the security question in the center-west and was interested in ameliorating agrarian conflicts there.

But if federal officials were hoping that the Bracero Program would become a means to pacify the countryside and ease agrarian pressures, it would be up to their state counterparts to fulfill those hopes, since bracero recruitment and selection responsibilities had been delegated to them with the opening of the regional Contracting Centers. The federal government now focused its attention on the question of undocumented entries into the United States. Despite the official policy that braceros had to get a contract at a recruitment center before leaving the country, the number of Mexican workers entering the U.S. without a contract continued to increase throughout the 1940s. In 1945, the first year that selection responsibilities were fully delegated to the state governments, U.S. authorities apprehended 63,602 undocumented Mexican agricultural workers. That number increased to 91,456 in 1946, and then ballooned to 182,986 in 1947 before declining slightly in 1948 to 179,385.⁸⁹

In an attempt to get a handle on the situation, President Manuel Ávila Camacho ordered Lázaro Cárdenas (who served as National Defense Secretary for the duration of World War II) in February 1945 to determine how many military units would be needed to help migratory officials effectively supervise the border.⁹⁰ Ávila Camacho's order came two weeks after General Eulogio Ortiz, the commanding officer of the 7th Military Zone, which included northeastern Mexico, reported in a letter to the state governors that an estimated 200 undocumented braceros were entering the U.S. every day in his jurisdiction. General Ortiz then suggested that his fellow Zone Commanders cooperate with the state governors and local-level agrarian authorities to develop a strategy to curb undocumented entries into the United States.⁹¹

But the military aid ordered by Ávila Camacho and desired by Ortiz appears to have never materialized. On December 18, 1945, the CTM – Confederación de Trabajadores de México, the national-level industrial labor union affiliated with the ruling PRI – affiliate in Mexicali reported that military patrols between that city and San Luis, Sonora might be necessary in order to stem the flow of migrant labor entering the United States.⁹² Two days later, Eugenio Elorduy, the president of the Baja California chapter of the National Chamber of Industry, recommended that four buses of army troops be assigned to the border.⁹³ And in April 1946, General Ortiz repeated his plea for cooperation in a letter that was nearly identical to the one he had written in January 1945.⁹⁴

In 1947, the Mexican state decided to take a new approach to the problem of undocumented braceros. Rather than focusing all its efforts on preventing undocumented entries, the federal government would work to legalize the status of those braceros that were already working in the U.S. without a contract. In January 1947, after a series of meetings with their

⁸⁹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

⁹⁰ Manuel Ávila Camacho, Acuerdo al C. Secretario de la Defensa Nacional, February 2, 1945, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 2, fojas sin número.

⁹¹ Eulogio Ortiz to C. Gobernador del Estado, January 22, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 10, fojas sin número.

⁹² Federación Territorial de la C.T.M. to Presidente República, December 18, 1945, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120-2, foja sin número.

⁹³ Ing. Eugenio Elorduy to Presidente República, December 20, 1945, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120-2, fojas sin número.

⁹⁴ Eulogio Ortiz to C. Gobernador del Estado, April 3, 1946, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1946, expediente 4, fojas sin número.

North American counterparts, Mexican officials established an Inter-Secretariat Commission to normalize the migratory status of undocumented braceros. The Commission operated out of three offices: in Mexicali, Baja California, across the border from Calexico, California; in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, across the border from El Paso, Texas; and in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, across the border from Hidalgo, Texas. The Commission's offices only worked with braceros that had entered the U.S. without a contract; it did not distribute new contracts. That responsibility still belonged to the contracting centers established in central Mexico.⁹⁵

Unfortunately, there is no documentary evidence as to which Secretariats made up the Commission – though it stands to reason that the Government, Labor, and Foreign Relations Secretariats, which had been involved with the administration of the Bracero Program since 1942, were members – or exactly what process undocumented braceros had to go through to normalize their status. What we do know is that the Commission offices across the border from Texas handled the cases of braceros working in that state, meaning that for the first time since the Bracero Program started, braceros were legally allowed to work there.⁹⁶ As noted above, braceros had been barred from working in Texas due to fears that would be subjected to racial discrimination there, though this proscription did not prevent Mexican laborers from working in that state illicitly.

By establishing the Inter-Secretariat Commission and sanctioning braceros to work in Texas, the federal government had once again reacted to a circumvention of Bracero Program policy. But in early 1948, President Miguel Alemán reversed course and reinstated the proscription after receiving numerous complaints that Texas employers were not honoring the terms of the contracts negotiated by the Commission and that braceros there were the victims of “racial exploitation” and mistreatment.⁹⁷ In response, U.S. immigration authorities in Texas reportedly looked the other way and did nothing to prevent braceros from entering the state. According to the League of United Latin American Citizens, a U.S.-based anti-discrimination organization, 20,000 braceros entered Texas without a contract after “the bars were let down” at entry points.⁹⁸ Alemán denounced this development, which earned him praise from Mexican officials, union leaders, and private citizens, but did little to resolve the impasse between the two governments.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Lic. Benito Coquet to C. Secretario de la Presidencia de la República, July 29, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, foja sin número.

⁹⁶ Luis G. Salinas to C. Lic. Don Miguel Alemán, October 19, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número.

⁹⁷ Frank A. Martínez to Presidente Miguel Alemán, May 11, 1948, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 587, expediente 545.3/98, foja sin número; Luis G. Salinas to C. Lic. Don Miguel Alemán, October 19, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número; Antonio G. Guerra to C. Presidente de la República, September 15, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 587, expediente 545.3/98, foja sin número; Summary of a December 17, 1947 letter from Adela S. Vente to C. Presidente, December 23, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 587, expediente 545.3/98, foja sin número.

⁹⁸ Jacob I. Rodríguez to Honorable Miguel Alemán, June 29, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, foja sin número; Benjamín J. Canales and Elías Licona, Resolution No. 2, June 10-12, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, foja sin número.

⁹⁹ Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to Sr. Lic. Miguel Alemán, October 20, 1948; Lic. Alfonso Anaya, Ernesto García Cabral, and José Álvarez S. to Sr. Lic. Don Miguel Alemán, October 20, 1948; Luis Gómez Z., Lázaro Vargas S., Bernardo Calzada, and Prop. Manuel Víctor Salas to Presidente República, October 21, 1948; Ignacio V. Oliva, José Narvaez Baca, José Bocanegra, and Alfonso Sainz to C. Presidente República, October 18, 1948; Senador Lic. Efraín Aranda Osorio to Presidente República, October 19, 1948; Prof. Tomás Cuervo to Lic. Miguel Alemán, October 19, 1948; J. Jesús Delgado to C. Presidente de la República, October 21, 1948; Armando Soto Ruiz to C. Presidente de la

The dispute regarding braceros working in Texas came at a critical juncture. The legislation that authorized U.S. participation in the Bracero Program was set to expire at the end of 1948.¹⁰⁰ In January 1949, representatives of both governments sat down together to negotiate terms for the program's continuation. The agreement reached during these meetings guided how Mexico administered the Bracero Program for the rest of its duration.

1949-1964

Examining the points agreed to in negotiations makes clear that both governments were preoccupied with the questions of undocumented braceros, anti-Mexican discrimination, and bracero remuneration. Seven of the first ten stipulations in the draft agreement were concerned with these topics. It was agreed that braceros could not be victims of racial and ethnic discrimination, though it was not specified how exactly that goal could be achieved. The salaries braceros received had to be on par with those paid to U.S. laborers who did similar work. Both governments also agreed to take steps to “radically suppress” undocumented entries, and that U.S. employers that hired undocumented braceros would be barred from using contracted braceros in the future.¹⁰¹

Despite the stated desire of both the Mexican and North American governments to limit the number of braceros entering the U.S. without a contract, the number of undocumented braceros apprehended continued to rise even after the new agreement was reached. The number peaked at 1,075,168 in 1954, the same year that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service launched the repatriation campaign known as Operation Wetback.¹⁰² The number of apprehensions declined after that, never exceeding 72,442 between 1956 and 1964.¹⁰³ But Operation Wetback was a U.S.-led campaign; Mexican ideas on how to curb undocumented entries are conspicuously absent from the documentary evidence available for the post-1948 period, though the issue did provide fodder for numerous newspaper stories.¹⁰⁴

The new stipulation that would most impact the Mexican state's administration of the Bracero Program had nothing to do with undocumented entries or anti-discrimination efforts. The North American delegation insisted that the Contracting Centers be moved from central Mexico to the border cities of Mexicali, Baja California, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. The request was made to save U.S. employers money, since it was also stipulated that U.S. employers would have to pay braceros' transportation costs from the

República, October 21, 1948; Lic. Rúben Machado Barreda to C. Presidente de la República, October 21, 1948; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número.

¹⁰⁰ Lic. Horacio Terán, Síntesis de los Puntos Básicos que Contendrá el Acuerdo Internacional para la Contratación de Trabajadores Agrícolas Mexicanos que Vayan a Prestar sus Servicios a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, February 3, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número.

¹⁰¹ Lic. Horacio Terán, Síntesis de los Puntos Básicos que Contendrá el Acuerdo Internacional para la Contratación de Trabajadores Agrícolas Mexicanos que Vayan a Prestar sus Servicios a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, February 3, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número.

¹⁰² Calavita, *Inside the State*, 53-55; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

¹⁰³ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

¹⁰⁴ News clippings are stored at the AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 807, expediente 2; and caja 1675C, expediente 12.

Contracting Centers to their work sites. Employers were also responsible for covering braceros' return transportation costs.¹⁰⁵

The Mexican delegation responded with a counterproposal. They suggested that the Contracting Centers be moved to Hermosillo, Sonora, Torreón, Coahuila, and Monterrey, Nuevo León, all non-border cities in border states. When explaining their reasoning, the Mexican negotiators cited “social and economic order” and their experiences during previous contracting periods.¹⁰⁶ In all likelihood, the delegation was referring to past years when braceros had flooded the border region and strained local resources before entering the United States without bracero contracts. The Mexican government probably feared that moving the Contracting Centers directly to the border could lead to a similar situation and make it easier for braceros to migrate as undocumented workers.

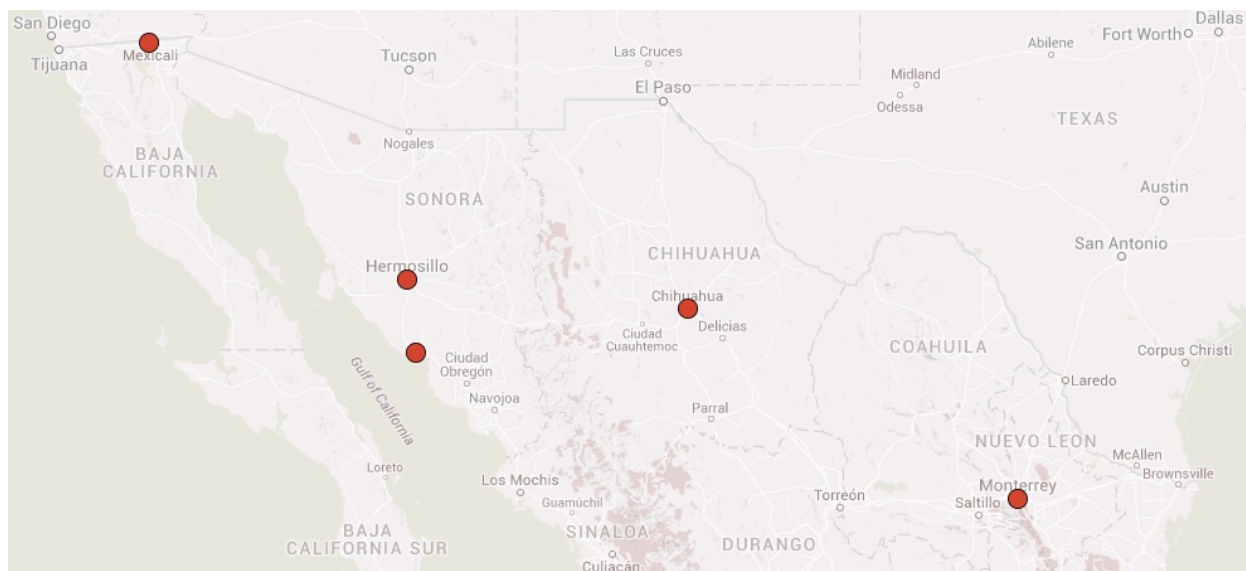
Shifting the Contracting Centers to northern Mexico – new centers were ultimately established in Hermosillo, Monterrey, and Chihuahua, Chihuahua – marked a significant policy change.¹⁰⁷ Until 1949, bracero contracts had always been distributed in central Mexico, either in Mexico City or regional cities like Irapuato and Uruapan (although in 1948 Jalisco braceros did have to make a stop in the coastal city of Guaymas, Sonora before entering the United States).¹⁰⁸ And while the Inter-Secretariat Commission had established offices in the border cities of Mexicali, Ciudad Juárez, and Reynosa in 1947, as noted above, these offices did not recruit new braceros; what they did was normalize the migratory status of braceros who had bypassed official protocols and migrated without a contract. But when U.S. negotiators insisted that the Contracting Centers be moved, the Mexican government acceded to the request.

¹⁰⁵ Lic. Horacio Terán, Síntesis de los Puntos Básicos que Contendrá el Acuerdo Internacional para la Contratación de Trabajadores Agrícolas Mexicanos que Vayan a Prestar sus Servicios a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, February 3, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número.

¹⁰⁶ Lic. Horacio Terán, Síntesis de los Puntos Básicos que Contendrá el Acuerdo Internacional para la Contratación de Trabajadores Agrícolas Mexicanos que Vayan a Prestar sus Servicios a los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, February 3, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-32, fojas sin número.

¹⁰⁷ Summary of an October 17, 1949 letter from José F. García and Enrique Martínez to C. Presidente, October 18, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-25, foja sin número.

¹⁰⁸ Lic. Carlos G. Guzmán to C. Presidente Municipal, October 11, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 11, expediente 262/13, foja sin número.



Map 1.3: Contracting Centers in northern Mexico. Source: Google My Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1SVK8r-dJPPqEL0oLq3NsMNZMQvo&usp=sharing>.

Northern officials reacted negatively when they were informed that the Contracting Centers were going to be moved. The most vocal complainant was Horacio Sobarzo, the interim governor of Sonora. After being informed in February 1949 by Government Secretary Adolfo Ruiz Cortines that a Contracting Center would likely be established in Hermosillo, Governor Sobarzo told Secretary Ruiz Cortines and President Alemán that it would be “seriously inconvenient” for a center to be opened there. Sobarzo argued that it would be impossible for Sonora to cooperate with the move because terrible flooding had diminished the state’s food stores, and he then asked that the Contracting Center be established in another state.¹⁰⁹ In August, after braceros that had initially gathered in Baja California started traveling to Hermosillo – even though the contracting process was set to start in September – Governor Sobarzo wrote again to Alemán.¹¹⁰ This time, Sobarzo asked the federal government for aid in transporting braceros back to their home communities, since Sonora’s precarious financial situation prevented his government from providing any sort of aid; Sobarzo also claimed that the growing number of braceros in Hermosillo was causing fear in the local population.¹¹¹

Sobarzo also had distinctly political reasons for not wanting braceros in Hermosillo. The elections held in Sonora in 1949 had been hotly contested, with four municipal elections being declared null and void by the state legislature in mid-August.¹¹² There were also reports from DIPS agents stationed in Sonora that Jacinto López of the opposition Partido Popular was leading a visible “agitation” campaign and calling on his adherents to be in Hermosillo when the new governor took office on September 1.¹¹³ On August 17, Governor Sobarzo told Government

¹⁰⁹ Lic. Horacio Sobarzo to C. Presidente de la República, February 3, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-25, fojas sin número.

¹¹⁰ L.O.P., Confidencial, August 20, 1949, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 802, expediente 8, foja sin número.

¹¹¹ Lic. Horacio Sobarzo to Lic. Miguel Alemán, August 6, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 594, expediente 546.6/1-25, fojas sin número.

¹¹² Lic. Horacio Sobarzo to Señor don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, August 18, 1949, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 802, expediente 8, foja sin número.

¹¹³ L.O.P., Confidencial, August 20, 1949, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 802, expediente 8, foja sin número.

Secretary Adolfo Ruiz Cortines that communists were active among the 2,500 braceros gathered in Hermosillo, and that he also feared that López would trick the braceros into joining his cause. Because of this, Sobarzo thought it prudent to make sure that Hermosillo was completely free of braceros by September 1.¹¹⁴ In the final week of August, the head of the Hermosillo Contracting Center reported that a train of braceros had left Hermosillo for Guadalajara, though he did not specify how many braceros were on it.¹¹⁵

Despite the opening of the new northern Contracting Centers in 1949, bracero contracts were also still being distributed in central Mexico. There were Contracting Centers operating in Irapuato, Guanajuato and Tlaquepaque, Jalisco, a suburb of Guadalajara, until at least 1955 and 1953, respectively.¹¹⁶ And the northern Contracting Centers did not remain fixed at their original locations. Contracts stopped being distributed in Hermosillo at some point between 1949 and 1954. And a Contracting Center operated in Mexicali in the summer of 1954.¹¹⁷

The Mexicali Contracting Center was opened largely as a result of unilateral action taken by the United States in early 1954. At the end of 1953, a new round of negotiations between the Mexican and North American governments stalled. In January 1954, officials from the U.S. Justice, Labor, and State Departments announced that bracero contracts would be awarded to migrant workers who successfully crossed the border. Thousands of prospective braceros flocked to northern Mexico, and when U.S. immigration agents opened the gates at the Mexicali-Calexico crossing on January 22, Mexican soldiers used force to prevent as many crossings as they could. Despite President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (who succeeded Miguel Alemán in 1952) ordering the troops to stand down, another series of disturbances occurred on January 27 when 2,500 prospective braceros attempted to enter the United States. Negotiations between the two governments resumed in February after U.S. authorities found themselves overwhelmed by the 10,000 braceros that entered through Calexico.¹¹⁸ With so many workers already gathered in Mexicali, it was easiest to distribute the contracts there once the two sides reached an agreement.

Nine months after the clashes in Mexicali, news spread in Sonora that a Contracting Center might once again be opened in Hermosillo. Just as in 1949, the news sparked a negative a reaction, only this time the discontent was not confined to the governor's office. Thirty business and financial organizations wrote to President Ruiz Cortines or federal Government Secretary Ángel Carvajal and asked them to reconsider the decision.¹¹⁹ These letters included a wrinkle

¹¹⁴ Lic. Horacio Sobarzo to C. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, August 17, 1949, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 802, expediente 8, foja sin número.

¹¹⁵ José Herrera O. to C. Director General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, August 25, 1949, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 802, expediente 8, foja sin número.

¹¹⁶ The last official mention of the Tlaquepaque Contracting Center available in the documentary evidence is an October 26, 1953 letter from Government Secretariat official José T. Rocha to Vicente Ochoa, a prospective bracero from La Barca, Jalisco. The last official mention of the Irapuato Contracting Office is an April 28, 1955 letter from Government Secretariat official Sebastián Aguilar N. to Daniel Arroyo Valverde, a prospective bracero from the state of Durango who had traveled to Irapuato in hopes of acquiring a contract there. Arroyo Valverde was instructed to return to Durango and to request a contract from that state's governor. José T. Rocha to C. Vicente Ochoa, October 26, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1199, foja sin número; Sebastián Aguilar N. to C. Daniel Arroyo Valverde y demás firmantes, April 28, 1955, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 882, expediente 546.6/12, foja sin número.

¹¹⁷ Prof. José S. Gallegos to C. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, July 6, 1954, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 893, expediente 548.1/124, foja sin número.

¹¹⁸ Cohen, *Braceros*, 208-211.

¹¹⁹ R.B. Astiazarán to Sr. Licenciado Ángel Carbajal, October 20, 1954; Dr. Alfonso Durán V. and Dr. Moisés Mirazo to Señor don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 25, 1954; Asociación de Productores de Cereales de la Región Agrícola de Hermosillo to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Maquinaria e Implementos del Pacífico,

not seen in Governor Sobarzo's 1949 appeals: their writers feared that an Hermosillo-based Contracting Center could lead to Sonoran workers leaving the state as braceros. Alfonso Almada, the director of the Sonora chapter of the National Chamber of Industrial Development, argued in his letter that "*bracerismo*" did not exist in Sonora and that it would be lamentable to "provoke such a habit" among Sonoran laborers.¹²⁰

Despite the concerns of Sonoran business leaders, a Contracting Center was once again established in that state, although in the coastal city of Empalme, not Hermosillo. However, the fears that *bracerismo* would take root in the northern states did not become a reality. Unlike the center-western Contracting Centers of the 1940s and early 1950s, the northern Contracting Centers could distribute contracts to braceros from other states. And to ameliorate the concerns of northern political and business leaders – and to ease continuing agrarian conflicts and pressures – a significant number of braceros continued to hail from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. In 1953 and 1954, when Contracting Centers were operating in the north and the center-west, 31.6 percent of the 510,413 contracts distributed went to Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán braceros. And from 1960 to 1964 (when the contracts were exclusively distributed in the northern cities of Chihuahua, Monterrey, and Empalme), Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán braceros received 33.1 percent of the 1,166,845 contracts distributed.¹²¹ According to the 1950 and 1960 Population Censuses, the population of these three states represented 17.4 and 17.3 percent of the national total, respectively, meaning that the earlier pattern was more or less maintained: less than one-fifth of Mexico's population received a disproportionate number of bracero contracts.¹²²

The continued reliance on Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers was not the only aspect of the Bracero Program that remained unchanged after the Contracting Centers were

S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; La Cosalteca, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Tapia Hermanos, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Comerciantes Unidos, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Beraud y Camou, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Abastecedora Regional, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Hermosillo Mercantil, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Almacenes Gacela to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Planta Almacenadora, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Gutiérrez Hermanos, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; J. Loustanak to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; C. Morales Hermanos, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Ferretería Matamoros, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Mercería de La Paz, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Valenzuela y Laborín, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Comercial Pitic, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Mueblería América, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Comercial Semillera to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Sonora Motors, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; F.A. Seldner, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; Auto Servicio, S.A. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 22, 1954; M. Vildosola, S. de R.L. to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines October 22, 1954; César Gandara to C. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 21, 1954; Antonio Salido to C. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 21, 1954; Alfonso Almada to C. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 20, 1954; Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Hermosillo to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 20, 1954; Ricardo C. Hill and Francisco Luken to Sr. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 20, 1954; AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 970, expediente 563.3/246, fojas sin número.

¹²⁰ Alfonso Almada to C. don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, October 20, 1954, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 970, expediente 563.3/246, foja sin número.

¹²¹ Cross and Sandos, *Across the Border*, 44; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157. During the 1953-1954 period, 58,761 contracts went to Guanajuato, 54,458 to Jalisco, and 48,371 to Michoacán. During the 1960-1964 period, 132,263 contracts went to Guanajuato, 110,054 to Jalisco, and 143,527 to Michoacán.

¹²² México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Séptimo Censo General de Población, 6 de Junio de 1950: Resumen General* (México: 1953), 26; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Resumen General* (México: 1962), 1, 3-5.

fully moved to the northern states. As had been the case since 1945, federal officials refused to play an active role in the recruitment and selection of braceros. Those duties continued to be performed by the state and municipal governments, and the federal government made sure that prospective braceros were aware of this. During Adolfo Ruiz Cortines's presidency (1952-1958), Government Secretariat officials would inform prospective braceros that wrote to the chief executive requesting a contract that their petitions had to be directed to their respective state governments.¹²³ In June 1959, Rogelio Flores Delgado, the assistant director of the Government Secretariat's Central Office of Migratory Workers, told a petitioner from Apaseo el Grande, Guanajuato that had written to President Adolfo López Mateos (whose presidential term coincided with the final six years of the Bracero Program) that the federal government – and in particular the unit he helped lead – was only responsible for assigning a “fixed quota” of bracero contracts to the various states. The Office of Migratory Workers had “nothing whatsoever” to do with the selection of individual braceros; that responsibility belonged to the officials designated by Guanajuato's governor.¹²⁴

Conclusion

In 1964, after 22 years and 4,646,199 contracts, the Bracero Program came to an end, mostly because of the changing political climate in the United States.¹²⁵ The Mexican government had agreed to the program hoping that it could effectively regulate the migration of its workers to the United States. But as this chapter demonstrates, federal-level Bracero Program policies were constantly being subverted and proved difficult to effectively enforce. The effort to centralize the selection of braceros and the distribution of their contracts in Mexico City failed; ejidatarios and other workers barred from migrating found ways around official policy; and many braceros simply entered the U.S. without a contract, at times with the complicity of North American authorities. At the same time, federal officials had to take into account the interests and demands of the U.S. government and domestic political and business leaders when crafting its migratory policies.

The mechanics of the Contracting Centers described above provide the clearest view into this process of subversion, policy failure, and competing interests. The federal government

¹²³ Mario Tapia Ponce to CC. Miguel Zurita M., José Espinosa Lerma, Felipe Fernández Ibarra y demás firmantes, March 12, 1958, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 899, expediente 548.1/644, foja sin número; Mario Tapia Ponce to C. Juan Maciel Raso, May 2, 1957, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1199, foja sin número; José María Casas to C. Eutimio Perucho Guerrero, May 11, 1954, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 882, expediente 546.4/28, foja sin número.

¹²⁴ Lic. Rogelio Flores Delgado to C. Presidente del Consejo Político Directivo del P.R.I.-P.N.M., June 22, 1959, AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 716, expediente 546.6/101, foja sin número.

¹²⁵ Calavita, *Inside the State*, 141-151; Délano, *Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States*, 95-99; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 139, 158-166, 227-264; Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 101-102; Lori A. Flores, “A Town Full of Dead Mexicans: The Salinas Valley Bracero Tragedy of 1963, the End of the Bracero Program, and the Evolution of California's Chicano Movement,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 44:2 (2013): 124-143. As the Bracero Program progressed, U.S. labor leaders and civil rights activists became increasingly critical of braceros' working conditions and of employers hiring them instead of U.S.-born agricultural workers. Demand for manual labor in the U.S. was also dampened by the increased mechanization of agriculture. Meanwhile, U.S. legislative leaders increasingly believed that the Bracero Program gave Mexican workers undue preference compared to migrants from other parts of the world. In 1965, the U.S. Congress passed an Immigration and Naturalization Act that limited guest worker initiatives and established annual hemispheric entry quotas (170,000 entry visas were allotted to European, Asian, and African migrants, and 120,000 entry visas were allotted to Canadian and Latin American migrants).

initially established a Contracting Center in Mexico City, but it was beset by inefficiency and corruption that directly contributed to a riot in February 1944. Additionally, many prospective braceros bypassed the Contracting Center and entered the United States without a contract. In the mid-1940s, Contracting Centers were established in regional cities in central Mexico, but officials there could only distribute contracts to braceros from those states. But in the late 1940s, the United States insisted that the Contracting Centers be moved to the border, leading to the establishment of Contracting Centers in northern Mexico, although federal authorities were able to ensure that the new Centers were not on the border proper. However, to ameliorate the concerns of northern political and business leaders that their states would be deprived of a labor force, the federal government allowed braceros from other states to receive their contracts in northern Mexico. Because of this, and because federal officials also wanted to minimize agrarian conflicts, a significant number of these braceros continued to come from the center-western states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán.

Although the federal government attempted to centralize the recruitment and selection of braceros and minimize undocumented departures, its efforts to achieve these ends failed. But, as demonstrated above, these failures did not prevent federal officials from making adjustments to its policies. Many of these adjustments also proved ineffective or were contingent on the desires and actions of outside actors. Thus, Mexico's federal state could not and did not impose its will on Bracero Program-related matters. However, it was not completely powerless. Rather, it showed itself to be quite malleable, adapting to failures and outside pressures so that it could achieve some, albeit not all, of its stated goals.

As also noted in this chapter, as the Bracero Program progressed, state governments were increasingly responsible for recruiting and selecting braceros. The following chapter will examine how officials in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán – three states that sent a disproportionate amount of braceros north – performed these duties.

Chapter Two

“To Prevent Useless Journeys”: The State Administration of the Bracero Program

In early 1951, a rumor began circulating in rural Mexico. Word got around that during the next bracero recruitment period, the contracts would be distributed in Mexico City, as they had been during the Bracero Program’s earliest years. Once aware of the rumor, authorities at all levels of government moved quickly to quash it. Federal Government Secretariat officials discussed the rumor with their state counterparts, and state officials in turn ordered municipal presidents to “prevent useless journeys” to the capital by posting broadsides informing prospective braceros that no contracts would be distributed in the federal capital. Rather, as had been the case since 1945, and as it would remain until the Bracero Program’s end in 1964, the state governments, and not the federal government, would be in charge, and contracts would be distributed in regional cities, the location of which would be announced shortly.¹ (The federal government’s retreat from the bracero recruitment and selection process was examined in Chapter One).

How did the state governments of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán – which have been absent from even the most recent studies of the Bracero Program – administer the Bracero Program-related responsibilities that the federal government delegated to them?² What concerns did state-level officials have? And what kind of rural workers were recruited and selected to migrate to the United States?

I show in this chapter that the center-western state governments delegated the task of recruiting and selecting braceros to their municipal counterparts, and I argue that this was done because regional officials’ intermediate position in the Mexican state’s apparatus allowed them to practice their own version of soft authoritarianism during the post-1940 period.³ By delegating these responsibilities, state officials acknowledged that their municipal counterparts were better positioned to minimize any negative impacts emigration might have on local agricultural production, determine which rural workers would benefit most from migrating, and, perhaps most important, absorb any criticism of the program’s administration. The delegation was thus in part a reflection of a broader political reality. Citizens could and did express displeasure with federal- and state-level policies during the post-1940 period, as Paul Gillingham, Wil Pansters, and Benjamin Smith have shown.⁴ If the governments of Guanajuato,

¹ Lic. Enrique Mendoza Ortiz to C. Presidente Municipal, January 27, 1951, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1951, expediente 4, foja sin número.

² Cohen, *Braceros*, 89-112; Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants*, 50; Snodgrass, “Patronage and Progress,” 255. The discussion of state governments in these works is limited to noting that state administrations were concerned about possible emigration-related labor shortages.

³ Gillingham and Smith, “The Paradoxes of Revolution,” 1-43.

⁴ Paul Gillingham, ““We Don’t Have Arms, but we do Have Balls”: Fraud, Violence, and Popular Agency in Elections,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 149-172; Wil G. Pansters, “Tropical Passion in the Desert: Gonzalo N. Santos and Local Elections in Northern San Luis Potosí, 1943-1958,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 126-148; and Benjamin T. Smith, “Building a State on the Cheap: Taxation, Social Movements, and Politics,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 255-275. Gillingham and Pansters focus specifically on municipal-level elections. Gillingham demonstrates that there was an expectation that municipal elections would remain competitive and that local residents would exercise a “popular veto” if federal or state authorities attempted to impose candidates. Pansters shows that San Luis Potosí strongman Gonzalo Santos had to negotiate with numerous

Jalisco, and Michoacán directly intervened in the bracero recruitment and selection process and failed to control it, they could become the targets of popular protest. And if the governors of the states were not secure in their standing, like the “traditional” regional strongmen of the post-1940 period studied by Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, then the federal government could use these protests as a pretext to intervene and dissolve their administrations.⁵ Thus, while the federal government delegated bracero recruitment and selection responsibilities to the states because its attempts to control this process failed, the center-western state governments delegated these responsibilities to municipalities largely to insulate themselves from the possibility of failure.

This delegation does not mean that Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán authorities were bystanders during the Bracero Program. Just as the federal government decided which states could send braceros to the United States and how many contracts each state received, the state governments decided which municipalities received bracero cards and how many. Nor does it mean that the transfer of responsibilities unfolded identically in the three states, as we will see in more detail below. While it was Guanajuato’s government, the first examined below, that first tasked municipal officials with recruiting and selecting braceros when the Irapuato Pre-Contracting Center opened in 1944, for example, in Michoacán it was state legislators who initially managed that responsibility.

The Guanajuato Model

Because the federal government took the lead in recruiting and selecting braceros during the Bracero Program’s earliest years, officials in Guanajuato were limited to minor administrative tasks such as publicizing the contracting periods.⁶ Then from mid-1943 through early 1944, rural workers from the state were barred from receiving bracero contracts, and state officials had even less to do with the program.

But after the federal government’s May 1944 decision to open a Pre-Contracting Center – where prospective braceros were screened before traveling to Mexico City to receive their contracts – in the city of Irapuato, Guanajuato, state authorities took a more active role in administering the program. Governor Ernesto Hidalgo’s first action in late May was to notify the state’s municipal presidents that local rural workers would once again be allowed to migrate as braceros, and to announce his goal that no one region of the state would be “affected” more by departures than the others.⁷ State Government Secretary Fausto Villagómez reiterated this latter concern in early June, when he stated that the state government hoped to achieve “economic

local actors and institutions during electoral cycles. Smith focuses on post-1940 taxation policy and notes that rural tax evasion and urban tax protests were common during the period.

⁵ Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, “Strongmen and State Weakness,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 108-125. Hernández Rodríguez argues that the post-1940 federal government allowed regional strongmen who operated like the *caudillos* of the past – such as San Luis Potosí’s Gonzalo Santos – to continue operating so long as they maintained the peace in their jurisdictions. If these strongmen failed, the federal government would intervene and dissolve the state governments.

⁶ Lic. Carlos Herrera Marmolejo to C. Presidente Municipal, August 21, 1942; Dr. Guillermo Torres González to CC. Delegados Municipales de Esta Jurisdicción, August 27, 1942; Dr. Guillermo Torres González to Público en General, August 27, 1942; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1942, expediente 42, fojas sin número.

⁷ Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Presidente Municipal, May 26, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número.

equilibrium” during the recruitment and selection process.⁸ This implied that bracero contracts would either be divided equally among the state’s regions or that the distribution might be tied to the state’s population distribution (unfortunately, there is no record of how exactly the state government distributed its allotment of bracero contracts this year). Next, the start of the pre-contracting period was delayed. The recruitment and selection process was first announced as starting in early June, but it was postponed to late July, and then postponed again to the first two weeks of August.⁹ According to Secretary Villagómez, the postponements occurred because Governor Hidalgo did not want bracero recruitment and selection to interfere with the sowing of the state’s maize crop.¹⁰

Once the pre-contracting dates were definitively set, Secretary Villagómez informed the state’s municipal presidents of the recruitment guidelines. Municipal officials were first to announce the program and then compile a registry of those interested in migrating. As we saw in Chapter One, only rural workers could be included in the registry, they could not be ejidatarios, and priority was to be given to those that were unemployed. The municipal presidents had until mid-July to inform the state government how many rural workers had been registered and how many of those registered could migrate without damaging the “vital” agricultural labor needs of each region. Once state officials had reviewed the information given them, they planned to divide the state’s allotment of 4,000 bracero contracts among the municipalities and inform local authorities how many prospective braceros from their jurisdiction could go to Irapuato to be screened. If the number of prospective braceros a municipality could send to Irapuato was less than the number of rural workers registered, the municipal presidents were ordered to select migrant workers via a random drawing. Selected braceros were to be issued certificates that they would present in Irapuato; in an effort to prevent the acquisition of contracts through fraudulent means, the certificates had to have the fingerprints of the selected bracero.¹¹

State officials’ concern about how the Bracero Program might impact agricultural production was what prompted the decision to make municipal authorities responsible for recruiting and selecting braceros in 1944. State authorities genuinely feared a decline in agricultural production, especially since the contracting period coincided with a critical phase of the agricultural cycle. Guanajuato Government Secretary Villagómez informed the municipal presidents that the lists of prospective braceros they compiled had to be the end result of a “meticulous study” of local agricultural labor conditions and employment rates. State officials believed that these studies would lower the number of rural workers deemed eligible to migrate, which in turn would reduce the possibility that the important economic activities of the

⁸ Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 1, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 13, foja sin número.

⁹ Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Presidente Municipal, May 26, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número; Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 1, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 12, foja sin número; Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 19, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, expediente 16, fojas sin número.

¹⁰ Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 1, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 12, foja sin número.

¹¹ Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 1, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 13, foja sin número; Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 19, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, expediente 16, fojas sin número.

municipalities would suffer due to emigration.¹² Implied in Villagómez's instructions was that municipal officials were better positioned to learn about the state's agrarian economy and how precisely the Bracero Program would affect it. And if municipal officials were the ones best equipped to limit any negative effects emigration might cause, then it was reasonable to make them responsible for selecting migrant workers.

Although state authorities believed their municipal counterparts were better positioned to limit any negative consequences the Bracero Program might cause, there were soon indicators that municipal officials were selecting unfit workers and letting other individuals intervene in the recruitment process. In early August, Governor Hidalgo wrote to the municipal presidents to inform them that many prospective braceros had been rejected at the Pre-Contracting Center because the staff there had discovered that they were not agricultural workers. The state still had to fulfill its quota of braceros, however, so the governor decided that those municipalities that had sent fewer workers to Irapuato would be allowed to send additional workers to the Pre-Contracting Center.¹³ Later that same month, state legislator José Delfino Carranza accused Felipe Hernández Segura, a León journalist who was campaigning for an alternate legislator position, of behaving "malevolently" during the bracero selection process. J. Carmen Gaona, the secretary general of León's Regional Agrarian Committee, admitted to Governor Hidalgo that Hernández Segura had been involved in the selection process. But Gaona informed the governor that all Hernández Segura had done was "disinterestedly" cooperate with local officials to ensure that landless rural workers had the opportunity to migrate. Gaona also expressed his belief that Delfino Carranza had made the accusations to "stain" Hernández Segura's "clean reputation" and thus achieve some personal gain.¹⁴

Despite these apparent irregularities, Guanajuato officials remained committed to having municipal presidents recruit and select braceros. Any petitions that prospective braceros sent to the state government were forwarded to the appropriate municipal authorities.¹⁵ And no changes were made to the recruitment and selection procedure in 1945, when the Irapuato Pre-Contracting Center became a full Contracting Center (that is, braceros would receive their contracts in Irapuato without having to then travel to Mexico City). In February of that year, Guanajuato Government Secretariat officials once again asked the state's municipal presidents to determine the approximate number of rural workers in their jurisdiction that could migrate as braceros without "damaging the economy and normal agricultural activities of that region."¹⁶ Municipal officials reported that there were between 7,620 and 7,830 workers interested in and eligible to acquire a contract. The state government then distributed eligibility cards, which had to be presented in Irapuato in order to receive a contract, "proportionally" – to use their own term – to 40 of the state's 44 municipalities.¹⁷ This does not mean that each municipality received an

¹² Lic. Fausto Villagómez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 1, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.03, año 1944, expediente 13, foja sin número.

¹³ Ernesto Hidalgo to C. Presidente Municipal, August 4, 1944, AGGEG, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número.

¹⁴ J. Carmen Gaona and Roque Bermúdez to C. Gobernador del Estado, August 5, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número.

¹⁵ Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, August 5, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 67, foja sin número.

¹⁶ Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to Sr. Presidentes Municipales del Estado, February 5, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, foja sin número.

¹⁷ Número Aproximado de Trabajadores del Campo Que Pueden Contratarse Como Braceros a los E.U. de A., Según Datos Presidencias Municipales, undated, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, foja sin número. Though the document is undated, it is included

equal number of cards; those that reported higher numbers of interested and eligible workers received more cards than those that reported lower numbers. For example, Moroleón Municipal President José Orozco Díaz received 100 cards to distribute after he reported that there were 300 eligible rural workers in his jurisdiction.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Ocampo Municipal President J. Jesús Moreno was sent 10 cards to distribute after he informed the state government that there were only 20 eligible workers in that municipality.¹⁹ The cards were to be distributed fairly via a random drawing, which involved putting the names of all eligible workers in a pot and then selecting a number that corresponded to the allotment set by the state government.²⁰

Linking the number of bracero cards that each municipality received to the number of eligible workers reported by municipal governments resulted in a skewed distribution pattern. According to the 1940 Population Census, three-quarters of Guanajuato's population lived in the municipalities of the Lerma-Chapala Basin.²¹ However, according to the reports submitted by municipal officials, that region was home to 85 percent of the state's eligible prospective braceros. And of the 4,100 prospective braceros that were selected, 3,310 (81 percent) were from the Lerma-Chapala Basin.²² This indicates that the state government had abandoned one of its stated goals from the previous year: that no one region of the state be affected by bracero departures than another. The state government still ensured that every municipality had the opportunity to send braceros, but it decided that it would be better to be sensitive to demand as opposed to distributing the cards equitably among all the municipalities.

Guanajuato's government linked the distribution of bracero cards to reported demand for two reasons. First, if the areas with the highest numbers of eligible rural workers received the most cards, it could help reduce the rate of undocumented migration. Second, the bracero cards could be used to ameliorate the effects of the agrarian pressures and conflicts that were fueling demand in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Some of these pressures and conflicts were influenced by the agrarian reform's own inherent flaws, such as the distribution of poor quality and insufficient lands. But others were rooted in past conservative opposition to the revolutionary state. The

in the file that contains documents pertaining to the February 1945 contracting period. The numbers included in this document also match those in the correspondence between municipal and state officials regarding the February 1945 contracting period.

¹⁸ José Orozco Díaz to Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez, February 6, 1945; Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, February 14, 1945; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

¹⁹ J. Jesús Moreno S. to Oficial Mayor del Gobierno, February 8, 1945; Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, February 14, 1945; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

²⁰ Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, February 14, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, foja sin número; Sebastián Balderas and others to C. Secretario del Trabajo y Previsión Social, February 26, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (14), año 1945, expediente 2, foja sin número. Random drawings were also used to select braceros in the northern state of Durango. For more on the bracero recruitment and selection process there, see Cohen, *Braceros*, 90-97.

²¹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Guanajuato* (México, D.F.: 1943), 13, 49, 85. Guanajuato's total population was 1,046,490. The population of the state's Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities was 782,004.

²² Número Aproximado de Trabajadores del Campo Que Pueden Contratarse Como Braceros a los E.U. de A., Según Datos Presidencias Municipales, undated, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1945, expediente 20, foja sin número. In 1945, there were between 7,620 and 7,830 eligible rural workers in Guanajuato. Between 6,450 and 6,650 of these workers were from the Lerma-Chapala Basin.

area had been the epicenter of conservative Catholic resistance to the agrarian reform during the Cristero Rebellion of the late 1920s – the first rebel activity in Guanajuato was an attack on the Lerma-Chapala Basin city of Pénjamo in late September 1926 – and in the late 1930s when the far right Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS) was formed – there were 495 Sinarquista demonstrations in Guanajuato’s Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities between 1939 and 1943.²³ And as Ben Fallaw points out, conservative Catholics in the region also opposed the revolutionary state’s public education initiatives during the 1930s.²⁴ My own research indicates that these conflicts continued into the bracero era (I will explore these conflicts in more depth in Chapter Four).

This conservative discontent spilled into state-level politics, making the governor vulnerable to removal, as happened in late 1945 and early 1946, when discontent with Governor Hidalgo’s squelching of a Sinarquista victory in León’s municipal elections resulted in violence and 26 deaths. Afraid that the unrest might become more widespread or that the deteriorating political situation would allow the Sinarquistas to make further inroads, President Manuel Ávila Camacho and the federal legislature intervened in January 1946 and removed Hidalgo from power. Carlos Obregón, the Sinarquista candidate, was sworn in as León’s municipal president on February 12, and Sinarquistas or members of the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) would hold that office until 1952.²⁵ Hidalgo was not the first Guanajuato governor to be removed from office by the federal government. Enrique Hernández Álvarez had been deposed in 1932, and Jesús Yáñez Maya suffered the same fate in 1935. But the removals of the 1930s were the result of national-level political conflicts, not failed state-level intervention in municipal politics.²⁶ What Hidalgo’s removal demonstrates is that, by the time the Bracero Program was underway, intervening in municipal politics had become as risky as supporting the wrong national-level leader.

The available documentary evidence suggests that the bracero recruitment and selection procedure established by Guanajuato’s state government in the mid-1940s remained unchanged during the duration of the Bracero Program, and I argue that the risks associated with municipal interventions are what prompted state officials to maintain this status quo.²⁷ The 1945 León

²³ R. Velarde to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, October 1, 1926, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.54, año 1926, expediente 84, fojas sin número; Pablo Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu: El movimiento sinarquista en el Bajío (1932-1951), Tomo I* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992), 313-314.

²⁴ Ben Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 193-217.

²⁵ Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu, Tomo I*, 233-250; Soledad Loaeza, *El Partido Acción Nacional: la larga marcha, 1939-1994: Oposición leal y partido de protesta* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 214-216. The UNS had partnered with León entrepreneurs to establish the Unión Cívica Leonesa (UCL), which nominated Carlos Obregón as its candidate for León’s municipal presidency. Obregón defeated the PRM’s candidate, Ignacio Quiroz, in December 1945, but Governor Hidalgo refused to recognize the electoral results. Soldiers and municipal police officials attacked demonstrators on January 2, 1946; this resulted in 26 deaths and 77 arrests. The repression sparked protests in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosí, and Tampico.

²⁶ Mónica Blanco, Alma Parra, and Ethelia Ruiz Medrano, *Guanajuato: Historia breve*, 3rd edition (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica; El Colegio de México; Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas, 2011), 211, 216-217. Hernández Álvarez’s past support of former president Álvaro Obregón (who had been assassinated in 1928) made him a target of former president Plutarco Elías Calles, who in the early 1930s was consolidating his position as *Jefe Máximo* (Maximum Chief) of the revolutionary state. Yáñez Maya was loyal to Calles, but after President Lázaro Cárdenas broke with the *Jefe Máximo*, Calles’s partisans were removed from office.

²⁷ AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Municipios, serie C-1, cajas 259 and 260. All the expedientes in caja 259 and expedientes 1-18 in caja 260 contain lists of unemployed workers compiled by Guanajuato’s municipal

conflict demonstrated that Guanajuato conservatives had enough power to mobilize and successfully block state-level policies and actions they disagreed with, and the Bracero Program had already contributed to low-level local political tensions in 1944.²⁸ If state authorities intervened directly in the recruitment and selection process and then failed to control it – as happened to the federal government in 1943 – that failure could spark new political conflicts that could escalate if the response to them was mishandled. Even though there was evidence that the municipal governments were not adhering to the guidelines established by the state government, state officials must have decided that tolerating these irregularities was preferable to intervening in the bracero recruitment and selection process and risking failure. This would explain why, when Pénjamo Municipal President Pablo Herrera Vázquez asked the state government in August 1951 if bracero cards could be given to five students of a local agrarian school, state official Ramón Acevedo replied that recruiting and selecting braceros was Herrera Vázquez's responsibility, not the state government's.²⁹

As noted in Chapter One, the Irapuato Contracting Center stopped operating after 1955. From then until the end of the Bracero Program, Guanajuato braceros received their contracts at centers in northern states. This chapter will now shift its attention to Michoacán, where the state government adopted the Guanajuato model of selecting braceros, but only after experimenting with other methods of recruiting and selecting migrant workers.

Disasters and Experimentation in Michoacán

As in Guanajuato, Michoacán state officials had little to do with the Bracero Program's administration when it first began in 1942. And like their counterparts in Guanajuato, Michoacán rural workers were proscribed from migrating as braceros beginning in the summer of 1943. However, as noted in Chapter One, there was one exception to the ban on Michoacán braceros: those affected by the eruption of the Parícutin Volcano were allowed to migrate.

The Parícutin Volcano was born and first erupted in February 1943 in the countryside approximately 50 kilometers west of Uruapan, in the Sierra Purépecha. The volcano grew rapidly – by the end of February it had already reached a height of 200 meters – and quickly affected the surrounding communities.³⁰ Four months after the initial eruption, all 186 families from the village of Parícutin (after which the volcano was eventually named) were relocated to lands near the Caltzontzín rail station. To accommodate these refugees, the state government purchased 232 hectares of land from landowner Julio Murguía; it also annexed 946 and 136 hectares, respectively, from the ejidos of San Francisco Uruapan and Toreo el Bajo.³¹ In January

governments; these lists were part of the preparatory process for the contracting period. The state government would presumably decide after reviewing these reports how many bracero cards would be sent to each municipality. Unfortunately, they do not include documentary evidence of how many bracero cards were ultimately sent to each jurisdiction.

²⁸ For more on popular mobilizations during municipal elections see Gillingham, ““We Don't Have Arms, but we do Have Balls”,” 156-161.

²⁹ Pablo Herrera Vázquez to C. Secretario General del Gobierno del Estado, August 7, 1951; Lic. Ramón Acevedo to C. Presidente Municipal, Pénjamo, September 3, 1951; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Municipios, serie C-1, caja 259, expediente 19, fojas sin número.

³⁰ Lic. Luis Marín Pérez to Presidente de la República, February 22, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 892, expediente 561.4/15-13, folder 1, fojas sin número.

³¹ Gral. Félix Ireta V., Memorandum para el señor General de División Manuel Ávila Camacho, Presidente de la República, June 11, 1943, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 892, expediente 561.4/15-13, folder 1, fojas sin número.

1944, scientific researcher Ezequiel Ordoñez reported that all the lands within 30 kilometers of the volcano had been affected by lava and ash. The heaviest damage was within 10 kilometers of the eruption, where farm and grazing lands had been rendered “sterile.”³²

Refugees began requesting bracero contracts from federal authorities in the summer of 1943.³³ In the autumn, the federal government decided to grant the exemption that allowed refugees to migrate as braceros.³⁴ The contract distribution process for these braceros would begin with Michoacán’s Government Secretariat organizing groups of displaced rural workers from affected municipalities, including Cotija, Los Reyes, Parangaricutiro, Peribán, and Uruapan.³⁵ The groups would then travel to the Mexico City Contracting Center with a letter from Michoacán Government Secretary Luis Marín Pérez. In the letters, Secretary Marín Pérez assured the federal Labor Secretariat officials administering the Contracting Center that the workers were indeed Parícutin refugees; Marín Pérez would also explain that the reason many of the workers did not have state-issued birth certificates – a document that needed to be presented in Mexico City – was because many of them only had church-issued birth certificates that could not be readily accessed.³⁶

In October 1943, federal Labor Secretariat official Luis Padilla Nervo proposed that the process by which Parícutin-affected braceros received their contracts be modified. Because of the high number of rural workers that were still being adversely impacted by the volcano, Padilla Nervo asked Governor Félix Ireta if he would be amenable to Mexican and U.S. officials traveling directly to the eruption zone to screen prospective braceros there before they went to Mexico City for their contracts.³⁷ In effect, Padilla Nervo was proposing the establishment of a Pre-Contracting Center like the one that would open in Irapuato, Guanajuato the following year. This proposed policy shift is not surprising given that, as discussed in Chapter One, the federal government by this time was already beginning to distance itself from the bracero selection process. Not only that, but prospective braceros from the region were also telling federal officials that it would be easier if they could receive their contracts in Michoacán, specifically the city of Uruapan.³⁸

There is no documentary evidence that a Pre-Contracting Center was ever established in Michoacán. But a full-fledged Contracting Center did open in Uruapan in 1945, and with its opening Michoacán rural workers who had not been affected by Parícutin were made eligible for

³² Ing. Ezequiel Ordoñez to C. Presidente de la República, January 15, 1944, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 892, expediente 561.4/15-13, folder 2, fojas sin número.

³³ Félix Anguiano Pérez, J. Jesús Orozco T., and Francisco Ramos N. to C. Gral. de División Manuel Ávila Camacho, June 29, 1943, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, foja 57.

³⁴ Lic. Luis Padilla Nervo to C. Gobernador del Estado de Michoacán, October 20, 1943, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 108-109.

³⁵ Lic. Luis Marín Pérez to Los Presidentes Municipales de Los Reyes, Peribán, Uruapan, Cotija, and Parangaricutiro, December 23, 1943, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, foja 125. This document is an order from Government Secretary Marín Pérez to these municipal presidents to stop issuing refugee certificates to rural workers from other jurisdictions, thus implying that rural workers from these municipalities were eligible to migrate as Parícutin refugees.

³⁶ Lic. Luis Marín Pérez to Ciudadano Director de la Oficina de Prevención Social, September 2, 1943, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 1, fojas 64-67.

³⁷ Lic. Luis Padilla Nervo to C. Gobernador del Estado de Michoacán, October 6, 1943, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 122.

³⁸ Rafael Chavarría and others, Memorandum para el Señor Presidente de la República, January 12, 1944, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 892, expediente 561.4/15-13, folder 1, fojas sin número.

bracero contracts. Before determining how many bracero eligibility cards would be sent to Michoacán, the federal Labor Secretariat asked state officials in February for the following information: the number of unemployed workers in the countryside and the state's urban centers; the number of individuals eligible for an ejido grant, but who had yet to receive one; the number of individuals whose crops had been affected by "plagues or adverse weather"; the number of "inactive youth" in urban centers; and the dates when crops were sowed and harvested in the state.³⁹ While there is no evidence that federal authorities asked Guanajuato officials for this specific information, it is plausible that information of this kind was gathered from all the states with Contracting Centers before it was decided how many bracero cards they would receive.

Michoacán Government Secretary Luis Moreno reported that there were 12,000 unemployed Michoacanos who could be eligible for a bracero contract. Of these, 6,000 were prospective ejidatarios who had yet to receive their land grants, 5,300 were rural workers that had been affected by plagues and adverse weather, and 700 were "idle" urban youth. The federal government sent 6,000 bracero cards to Michoacán, though only 4,000 were initially distributed (the federal Labor Secretariat ordered the remaining 2,000 be held in reserve until after the initial recruitment period).⁴⁰ It is not clear when the additional bracero cards were distributed. But when federal Labor Secretary Francisco Trujillo Gurría asked Governor José María Mendoza Pardo in July if the state could send more braceros to the U.S., Michoacán Government Secretary Luis Moreno echoed his Guanajuato counterpart Fausto Villagómez and replied that an additional allotment of bracero cards would be inopportune because crops were starting to be planted.⁴¹

Unlike Guanajuato, where the state government divided its allotment of bracero cards among the state's municipal presidents and tasked them with selecting braceros, Michoacán officials decided to send the cards to the state's local legislative districts. Eleven of the state's twelve legislative districts received between 100 and 550 cards to distribute. The vast majority of the first 4,000 cards that were distributed – 2,900, or 73 percent – went to districts in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Of the remaining 1,100 cards, 850 went to the districts of the Sierra Purépecha and the Pátzcuaro Basin, and 250 went to the Tierra Caliente districts.⁴² State legislators would select braceros after receiving their allotment of eligibility cards, presumably via a drawing.⁴³

³⁹ Con objeto de cumplir acuerdos internacionales cooperación nuestra República con Naciones Unidas respecto envío braceros vecino país Norte, undated and unsigned; Lic. Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Secretario del Trabajo, February 12, 1945; AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 11/12, 13/14-14/15. In his February 12 letter, Government Secretary Moreno references the information requested in the undated and unsigned document.

⁴⁰ Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Secretario del Trabajo, February 12, 1945, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 13/14-14/15.

⁴¹ Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurría to Sr. Gobernador Estado, July 13, 1945; Lic. Luis M. Moreno to C. Licenciado Francisco Trujillo Gurría, July 16, 1945; AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 345-346 and 343.

⁴² Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Secretario del Trabajo, February 12, 1945, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 13/14-14/15. The initial allotment of 4,000 cards was distributed as follows: 550 to Morelia; 500 to Jiquilpan; 500 to Puruándiro; 500 to Zamora; 450 to La Piedad; 450 to Pátzcuaro; 400 to Uruapan; 200 to Maravatío; 200 to Zitácuaro; 150 to Apatzingán; and 100 to Tacámbaro. Morelia, Jiquilpan, Puruándiro, Zamora, La Piedad, Maravatío, and Zitácuaro are in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Uruapan is in the Sierra Purépecha, Pátzcuaro is in the Pátzcuaro Basin, and both Apatzingán and Tacámbaro are in the Tierra Caliente.

⁴³ Lic. Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano J. Jesús Ávila, February 19, 1945, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 32/33.

Why did Michoacán's government delegate the task of selecting braceros to state legislators, as opposed to municipal presidents? And why was the bracero card distribution pattern skewed? The Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities were home to approximately two-thirds of the state's population, but they received close to three-quarters of the state's allotment of cards.⁴⁴ The likely answer to the first question is that the state government wanted to streamline the recruitment and selection process. Both Guanajuato and Michoacán had comparable populations; according to the 1940 Population Census, Guanajuato had 1,046,490 residents, while Michoacán had 1,182,003 residents. But there were 102 municipalities in Michoacán, as opposed to 44 in Guanajuato.⁴⁵ Thus, charging state legislators with distributing the bracero cards meant that officials in Morelia only had to coordinate their efforts with 11 individuals, as opposed to over 100.

The answer to the second question is that the state government was being sensitive to demand. There is no record of state legislators reporting the number of eligible rural workers in their jurisdictions, but Michoacán rural workers sent 112 petitions for bracero contracts to either the federal or state government in 1945. Eighty-three of these petitions, or 74 percent, were sent by rural workers who lived in the Lerma-Chapala Basin.⁴⁶ As in Guanajuato, demand in Michoacán's Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities was fueled by the agrarian reform's shortcomings and by conflicts rooted in past conservative opposition to the revolutionary state. Cristero activity had been widespread in the region – the first rebel activity in Michoacán was in Ciudad Hidalgo in late 1926 – and there were 492 Sinarquista demonstrations in the area between 1939 and 1943.⁴⁷ My own research indicates that, just as in Guanajuato, agrarian conflicts and conservative discontent persisted into the bracero era (I will explore these conflicts in Chapter Four). However, unlike Guanajuato, this discontent did not threaten the stability of Michoacán's government, at least not in 1945.

Tasking state legislators with bracero recruitment and selection responsibilities did streamline the process, but there were soon allegations that these officials were not adhering to the guidelines established by the state government. In late February, Zamora resident Procopio Valadéz complained to Governor José María Mendoza Pardo that his district's representative, Ignacio Torres Espinosa, had not selected braceros himself. Rather, Torres Espinosa had given the bracero cards to the district's alternate legislator, Antonio Loera, who in turn sold the cards for \$100 to \$150 pesos. Valadéz lamented that prospective braceros who were only trying to "relieve their poverty" had "fallen into the hands of shameless exploiters" before they had even

⁴⁴ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán* (México, D.F.: 1943), 13, 46, 73, 102, 130, 160; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Séptimo Censo General de Población, 6 de Junio de 1950: Estado de Michoacán* (México: 1952), 24-28. According to the 1940 Population Census, Michoacán's total population was 1,182,003; 786,041 lived in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Per the 1950 Population Census, the state's total population was 1,422,717; 934,807 lived in the Lerma-Chapala Basin.

⁴⁵ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Guanajuato*, 11, 13; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán*, 11, 13.

⁴⁶ Petitions are in AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folder 4; caja 795, expediente 546.6/120-15. And AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expedientes 1 and 3.

⁴⁷ Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu, Tomo I*, 315-316; Alicia Olivera Sedano, *Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), 167.

departed Mexico. Valadéz then suggested to the governor that Zamora's municipal president be made responsible for selecting braceros during future contracting periods.⁴⁸

Valadéz's accusations sparked a local-level political skirmish. Numerous municipal, agrarian, and labor leaders rushed to Torres Espinosa's defense. Twenty-two letters denouncing the "vile calumnies" and "intrigues" against the state legislator were sent to the state government. The letter writers – a group that included Antonio Loera (the alternate legislator accused of selling bracero cards), five municipal presidents (including Rubén Silva of Zamora), three ejido presidents, and the leaders of unions representing Zamora's chauffeurs, merchants, and construction workers – assured Governor Mendoza Pardo that Torres Espinosa had distributed the bracero cards himself and that he did not charge a fee for them. Antonio Loera argued that the accusers were deposed leaders (*líderes caídos*) who were upset that they would not be the ones selecting braceros. And Rubén Silva claimed that Procopio Valadéz was not a resident of Zamora, and that the allegations were the work of "dissident elements" attempting to drive a wedge between Zamora's municipal government and Torres Espinosa.⁴⁹

Michoacán officials did modify the state's Bracero Program policies in 1947, but not because of conflicts like the one in Zamora or any dissatisfaction, either official or popular, with how state legislators had recruited and selected migrant workers. Although many of the protocols announced by the state government that year were familiar ones – prospective braceros had to be healthy, non-ejidatarios of prime working age (no older than 45 years old), and they had to possess official identification issued prior to 1947 – there were two significant new wrinkles.⁵⁰ Only rural workers from the areas near the cities of Cuitzeo, Pátzcuaro, Uruapan, Villamar, and Zamora were eligible to receive contracts. And the state government chose individual "representatives," including federal legislator Enrique Bravo Valencia and Pátzcuaro municipal president Luis Ortiz Lazcano, to distribute cards in these four regions (Zamora and Villamar were treated as a single area).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Procopio Valadéz to Ciudadano Gobernador del Estado, February 21, 1945, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 57/58-58/59.

⁴⁹ Antonio Loera M. to Lic. José María Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Luis Arévalo to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza, March 6, 1945; Petronio Rojas to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza, March 6, 1945; José Castillo to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 7, 1945; José Muñoz to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 7, 1945; Rubén Silva to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 7, 1945; Luis Campos Morales to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 13, 1945; Benito Ramírez to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Antonio Alfaro to Lic. José María Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Rubén Silva to Lic. José María Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Cristino Rino to Lic. José María Mendoza, March 5, 1945; Pedro Alvarado to Lic. José María Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Lorenzo Plancarte to C. Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Miguel Díaz to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 5, 1945; Silvestre Hurtado to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 11, 1945; J. Jesús Rodríguez Mendoza to C. Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 11, 1945; Prof. Manuel Madrigal M. to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 12, 1945; Ernesto Espinoza Ordaz to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 11, 1945; Rubén M. Rodríguez to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 11, 1945; Cirilo Vargas to Lic. José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 12, 1945; J. Jesús Cárdenas R. to C. Gobernador del Estado, March 8, 1945; José Ma. González Ochoa to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 9, 1945; AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 83/84, 91, 94, 101-103, 133, 263-275, 281.

⁵⁰ Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, April 4, 1947, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 11.

⁵¹ Lic. Gilberto Vargas López to Ciudadano Presidentes Municipales, April 14, 1947; Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno to Ciudadano Rafael Hinojosa Torres, April 14, 1947; Lic. Gilberto Vargas López to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, April 15, 1947; Lic. Gilberto Vargas López to Ciudadano Jefe de Tenencia de Ocampo, April 18, 1947; AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, fojas 63, 70, 90, and 166. Hinojosa Torres was tasked with distributing cards in Uruapan. In his April 15 and 18 letters, Vargas

These changes were a calculated response to ecological disasters. The representatives charged with distributing bracero cards were instructed to consider very specific criteria when selecting braceros. We have already seen that bracero contracts were distributed relatively liberally in the areas affected by the Parícutin volcano during the early 1940s. Because regular eruptions were still occurring in 1947, Rafael Hinojosa Torres, the individual tasked with distributing bracero cards in Uruapan, was instructed to distribute his allotment of 1,500 cards among those still being impacted by the volcano.⁵²

In Zamora, Villamar, and Cuitzeo, 4,500 cards were to be distributed among those rural workers affected by a hoof-and-mouth disease outbreak.⁵³ The outbreak began in Veracruz in December 1946, though Enrique Bravo Valencia, the same federal legislator who would later distribute bracero cards, reported in early February 1947 that there had yet to be any cases in Michoacán.⁵⁴ But within one week of Bravo Valencia's report, the El Zapote Cattle Association, in the municipality of Álvaro Obregón, claimed that their cattle had contracted the disease.⁵⁵ In early March, there was a confirmed outbreak in Villamar, though local veterinarians quickly destroyed the infected animals.⁵⁶ However, at the end of the month, residents of Chavinda, Jiquilpan, and Venustiano Carranza complained that nothing was being done about the Villamar outbreak and that official inaction was imperiling some 120,000 head of cattle.⁵⁷

When official action was taken, it led to popular discontent and unintended consequences. Quarantines were put in effect, though several individuals, including Municipal President José Arroyo, likened the quarantine of La Piedad to a siege and claimed that military officers were so zealous in preventing travel between that city and nearby Irapuato, Guanajuato that local commerce had ground to a standstill, leading to a shortage of essential goods.⁵⁸ The federal government also ordered the army into affected areas to destroy infected animals via the *rifle sanitario* (sanitary rifle); according to Jean Meyer, soldiers destroyed 500,000 head of cattle

López identified Luis Ortiz Lazcano and Enrique Bravo Valencia as the individuals who would distribute cards in Pátzcuaro and Zamora, respectively. It is not clear if Hinojosa Torres was a government official of any kind.

⁵² Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno, Instrucciones a la que se sujetará la preselección de braceros: Uruapan, undated, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 75.

⁵³ Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno, Instrucciones a la que se sujetará la preselección de braceros: Zamora y Villamar, undated; Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno, Instrucciones a la que se sujetará la preselección de braceros: Cuitzeo, undated; AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, fojas 98 and 103.

⁵⁴ José Ma. Nares A., Lic. Alfonso Ríos Gómez, and J. Jesús Chávez to Lic. Miguel Alemán, December 31, 1946; Dip. Enrique Bravo Valencia to C. Presidente República, February 2, 1947; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, fojas sin número; Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu*, Tomo II, 280.

⁵⁵ Summary of a February 7, 1947 letter from Asociación Ganadera de la Col. Agrícola "El Zapote" to C. Presidente, February 11, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, foja sin número.

⁵⁶ Dip. Enrique Bravo Valencia to Presidente República, March 5, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, foja sin número.

⁵⁷ Bernabé Macías and Rafael Vega to C. Presidente República, March 26, 1947; Summary of a March 26, 1947 letter from Salvador Romero and Leopoldo Villaseñor to C. Presidente, March 27, 1947; Summary of a March 27, 1947 letter from Miguel Méndez and Juan Cendejas to C. Presidente, March 28, 1947; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, fojas sin número.

⁵⁸ Autotransportes de La Piedad, SCL to Presidente República, August 11, 1947; José Arroyo D. to Presidente República, August 12, 1947; Summary of a July 23, 1947 letter from Catarino Ramírez to C. Presidente, July 25, 1947; José Arroyo Domínguez, on behalf of Autotransportes de La Piedad, S.C.L. to C. Presidente de la República, July 2, 1947; Cámara Nacional de Comercio to Presidente República, June 12, 1947; José María León to Presidente República, June 19, 1947; Summary of a June 19, 1947 letter from Federación C.T.M. to C. Presidente, June 20, 1947; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, fojas sin número.

throughout Mexico during the outbreak.⁵⁹ However, there were numerous accusations that the army indiscriminately slaughtered animals, including healthy ones, and that indemnities promised to owners of destroyed animals were never paid.⁶⁰ The loss of animals soon affected agricultural activities, since rural workers did not have oxen to plow their fields in preparation for the planting season.⁶¹ And in Zamora and La Piedad, there was concern that children were suffering from malnutrition because they no longer had regular access to meat and dairy products.⁶² This displeasure led to violence in Senguío, where in September conservative rural workers attacked the veterinary teams that were operating in the area. After the clashes, the UNS asked the federal government to intervene and remove Governor José María Mendoza Pardo, but the request was not fulfilled.⁶³

Given the severity of the outbreak and its consequences, it is easy to understand why the state government focused part of its bracero recruitment efforts on those who had lost animals. But why limit hoof-and-mouth-related departures to Zamora, Villamar, and Cuitzeo, especially since wide swaths of the state were affected? Departures were limited to these areas because of the quarantines in effect. When Michoacán's municipal presidents were informed of the requirements for the 1947 contracting period, they were instructed to take steps to limit worker mobilizations that would further spread the disease.⁶⁴ Thus, the state government must have determined that movement between these three cities and Uruapan would not exacerbate the outbreak.

It is more difficult to discern why the state government allotted 1,500 bracero cards to Pátzcuaro rural workers in 1947. Municipal President Luis Ortiz Lazcano was instructed to recruit indigenous rural workers during the contracting period.⁶⁵ However, the instructions made no mention of the hoof-and-mouth disease outbreak or the Parícutin eruption, despite the fact that Pátzcuaro was surrounded by the disaster areas (the city is south of the Lerma-Chapala Basin, where the hoof-and-mouth outbreak was most prevalent, and 60 kilometers northeast of Uruapan and the Parícutin eruption zone). Nor could the state government say that it was

⁵⁹ Jean Meyer, *El Sinarquismo, el Cardenismo y la Iglesia: 1937-1947* (México: Tusquets Editores, 2003), 232.

⁶⁰ Summary of a December 20, 1947 letter from J. Guadalupe Bravo Méndez y demás firmantes to C. Presidente, December 27, 1947; Summary of a September 15, 1947 letter from Liduvina Rábago Villaseñor Vda. de Yosef to C. Presidente, September 18, 1947; Salvador Ruiz to Presidente República, August 25, 1947; Summary of a July 5, 1947 letter from Emilia Ramírez, Josefina Méndez, Rosa Adame, Petra Ayala y demás firmantes to C. Presidente, July 8, 1947; Summary of a June 10, 1947 letter from J. Jesús Avalos Méndez to C. Presidente, June 14, 1947; Summary of a May 11, 1947 letter from J. Trinidad Carrasco, Pablo Rojas y demás firmantes to C. Presidente, May 30, 1947; Summary of a May 12, 1947 letter from José Zavala to C. Presidente, May 14, 1947; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, fojas sin número.

⁶¹ Summary of a September 21, 1947 letter from David Barragán to C. Presidente, September 26, 1947; Summary of a September 9, 1947 letter from Valentín Romero to C. Presidente, September 10, 1947; Summary of a July 3, 1947 letter from Everardo Ildefonso Amezcua to C. Presidente, July 4, 1947; Evaristo Álvarez O. to Presidente República, June 13, 1947; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, fojas sin número.

⁶² Doctor Pediatra Manuel M. Bribiesca to Presidente República, July 12, 1947; Virginia C. de Guerrero, María Guadalupe A. de Padilla, Carmen A. de Rojas, and Esther A. de Gudiño to Presidente de la República, June 18, 1947; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 291, expediente 425.5/2-15, fojas sin número.

⁶³ Pablo Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu: El movimiento sinarquista en el Bajío (1932-1951)*, Tomo II (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992), 288-289.

⁶⁴ Lic. Gilberto Vargas López to Ciudadano Presidentes Municipales, April 14, 1947, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 63.

⁶⁵ Lic. Luis Manuel Moreno, Instrucciones a que se sujetará la preselección de braceros: Pátzcuaro, undated, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 72.

responding to high demand from local indigenous workers. There was only one documented petition for bracero contracts from the municipality in 1947, and it was made by a group of unemployed railroad workers who did not identify themselves as indigenous.⁶⁶ In fact, there was only one request for contracts that year – a February petition made by Miguel Bravo Cortés on behalf of 34 residents of Angahuán, in the municipality of Uruapan – that explicitly mentioned the indigenous ancestry of the would-be braceros.⁶⁷ Ortiz Lazcano was also an interesting choice to recruit indigenous rural workers, given his past history. As noted by Christopher Boyer, Ortiz Lazcano, whose family had owned the Casas Blancas hacienda in Opopeo since the nineteenth century, had a dim view of Michoacán’s indigenous peoples, especially those that supported the agrarian reform; in the early 1920s, Ortiz Lazcano described indigenous peoples as naturally “lazy,” and he predicted that they would abandon any lands granted to them because they lacked “incentive.”⁶⁸

Ultimately, the decision to recruit Pátzcuaro indigenous rural workers as braceros might have been made for the sake of convenience. As noted above, the state government wanted to limit movement in the countryside so as to limit the spread of hoof-and-mouth disease. Pátzcuaro’s proximity to Uruapan meant that prospective braceros from there would not have to travel far to receive their contracts, offering the disease fewer opportunities to be spread. The state government could then also claim to be helping one of Pátzcuaro’s more important demographic groups. Per the 1950 Population Census, 10 percent of Pátzcuaro’s male population spoke an indigenous language.⁶⁹

There was a significant change to the way the Bracero Program operated in Michoacán after 1947: the Uruapan Contracting Center stopped operating at some point between that year and 1953. Michoacán rural workers could still migrate as braceros. But during the early 1950s they had to travel to the Irapuato, Guanajuato or Tlaquepaque, Jalisco Contracting Centers to receive their contracts.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the available documentary evidence does not indicate how Michoacán braceros were recruited and selected during this period.

⁶⁶ Audén Calvillo to Señor José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, March 17, 1947; Audén Calvillo Villanueva, Lista de los padres de familia y tutores, habitantes de la Estación de Ajuno, municipio de Pátzcuaro, Mich., que en atención a la falta de trabajo de que carece en la región, se unifican en un grupo libre para solicitar del Gobierno del Estado su amplia y efectiva colaboración a efecto de conseguir trabajo que les proporcione el medio de manutención para sus familiares e hijos, March 13, 1947; AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, fojas 4-7.

⁶⁷ Miguel Bravo Cortés to Ciudadano Presidente de la República, February 28, 1947; Miguel Bravo Cortés, Lista de los vecinos de Angahuán, Mpio. de Uruapan, Mich., aspirantes a braceros, February 28, 1947; AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, fojas 1-3. Bravo Cortés referred to Angahuán as an indigenous community in his request; the prospective braceros wanted to migrate because they were Parícutin refugees.

⁶⁸ Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 101-103. Opopeo is 14 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, in the municipality of Salvador Escalante. Miguel Lazcano, a mestizo, first moved to the region in 1859. His son leased the Casas Blancas hacienda in 1867, and then purchased it a few years later.

⁶⁹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Séptimo Censo General de Población, 6 de Junio de 1950: Estado de Michoacán*, 26, 91. Pátzcuaro’s male population was 12,323. There were 1,272 men who spoke an indigenous language. While speaking an indigenous language does not necessarily mean that these men self-identified as indigenous, it is the only measurable form of indigenous identity included in the 1950 Population Census.

⁷⁰ José T. Rocha to C. Plutarco Moreno G. y grupo que representa, July 3, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 769, expediente 534.6/90, foja sin número; José T. Rocha to C. Toribio Hernández Váldez, July 18, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 892, expediente 548.1/106, foja sin número.

But from 1959 until the Bracero Program's end in 1964, when the Contracting Centers had been permanently moved to northern states, Michoacán's state government used Guanajuato's method of recruiting and selecting braceros. After being informed by federal officials how many rural workers from the state would be allowed to migrate, Michoacán's Government Secretariat would divide its allotment of bracero cards among the municipalities.⁷¹ The lists of prospective braceros had to be drawn up by an *ayuntamiento* (municipal council) official, the local tax collector, a representative of the municipality's rural workers, and an "honorable" resident of the municipal seat.⁷² Braceros would be selected via public drawings, and selected braceros would then be informed which northern Contracting Center they had to report to.⁷³ Although at times state officials did specify which communities the bracero cards had to go to, they usually just instructed municipal presidents to favor those "in most need" when deciding which rural workers were eligible for the drawings (the basic requirement that prospective braceros be healthy, non-ejidatarios of prime working age remained in place).⁷⁴

Michoacán adopted Guanajuato's method of recruiting and selecting braceros in part because there were no longer any pressing ecological concerns that required focused bracero recruitment as a response. The Parícutin Volcano stopped erupting in 1952, and the hoof-and-mouth disease outbreak abated by the end of the 1940s. But if bracero recruitment no longer had to be sharply focused on a handful of regions, why not attempt to streamline the process by centralizing it or delegating recruitment responsibilities to the state's legislators, as had been done in 1945? Why implement a system that would have the state government communicating and interacting with 110 municipal governments?⁷⁵

It seems, from the language state officials used in their instructions, that Michoacán officials decided to delegate bracero recruitment and selection responsibilities because they finally acknowledged that municipal authorities were best positioned to determine who could benefit the most from migrating. As noted above, municipal officials were instructed to focus their recruitment efforts on especially needy rural workers (*más necesitados* was the term the state government used). And among the individuals responsible for identifying prospective braceros were local tax collectors, who, despite their often strained relationship with the citizens

⁷¹ Mario Tapia Ponce to C. Oficial Mayor de Gobierno, July 13, 1959, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 6, foja 110; Melesio Aguilar Ferreira to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, July 16, 1959, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 6, foja 111.

⁷² Profr. Manuel López Pérez to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, July 12, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 12, foja 14.

⁷³ Lic. José L. Flores to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, September 3, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, foja 110.

⁷⁴ Melesio Aguilar Ferreira to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, July 23, 1959, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 6, foja 168; Melesio Aguilar Ferreira to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, July 30, 1959, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 6, foja 230; Prof. Manuel López Pérez to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, July 8, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 12, foja 24.

⁷⁵ By 1960, the number of municipalities in Michoacán had increased to 110. México, Dirección General de Estadística, *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Michoacán* (México: 1963), 1-2.

they were charged with collecting monies from, presumably had knowledge of the landed and financial status of those rural workers interested in migrating.⁷⁶

During these years when Michoacán's municipal presidents recruited and selected braceros, a trend from 1945 reemerged: the vast majority of the state's braceros were from the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Between 1959 and 1964, the state government sent 76 percent of its allotment of bracero cards to the municipal governments of that region.⁷⁷ This once again resulted in a skewed distribution pattern, since, according to the 1960 Population Census, 64 percent of the state's population lived in that region.⁷⁸ However, as in 1945, this distribution pattern did reflect the demand for bracero contracts. Michoacán prospective braceros sent 813 petitions for contracts to federal and state authorities between 1959 and 1964, and 594 of these petitions (73 percent) were from the Lerma-Chapala Basin.⁷⁹ And just like in the mid-1940s, the agrarian reform's internal flaws and agrarian conflicts whose roots dated to the conservative discontent of the 1920s and 1930s fueled this demand (I will explore these flaws and conflicts in Chapters Four and Five).

We now turn to Jalisco, where the state government resisted the departure of braceros and organized sugar workers played a pivotal role in undermining that resistance.

Resistance in Jalisco

Like their counterparts in Guanajuato and Michoacán, Jalisco state officials had little to do with the administration of the Bracero Program during its earliest years. When the program began in 1942, Governor Silvano Barba González asked the state's municipal presidents to inform him as to how many workers were interested in migrating, but the state government took no other actions that year.⁸⁰ Jalisco officials remained on the sidelines even after the establishment of Contracting Centers in Guanajuato and Michoacán. This was because the

⁷⁶ Smith, "Building a State on the Cheap," 263, 270. Smith notes that tax evasion was frequent in rural communities, and that some tax collectors stopped performing what they viewed as a "thankless" task. Tax collectors were also often the targets of popular discontent, especially if they were perceived as being incompetent.

⁷⁷ According to Harry Cross and James Sandos, 143,527 Michoacán rural workers migrated as braceros between 1960 and 1964. For the period 1959-1964, there are records for how 15,943 bracero cards were distributed within the state; 12,100 cards were sent to the municipalities of the Lerma-Chapala Basin. For the distribution of bracero cards by state, see Cross and Sandos, *Across the Border*, 44. Records of the distribution of bracero cards within Michoacán are in AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expedientes 6-7; caja 3, expediente 9; caja 4, expedientes 12-15; caja 5, expediente 17; and caja 6, expedientes 20 and 22.

⁷⁸ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Michoacán*, 1-2. Michoacán's total population was 1,851,876; 1,190,645 lived in the Lerma-Chapala Basin.

⁷⁹ Petitions are in AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 715, expedientes 546.6/15, 546.6/28, 546.6/36, and 546.6/40; caja 716, expedientes 546.6/44, 546.6/52, 546.6/55, 546.6/56, 546.6/61, 546.6/65, 546.6/69, 546.6/71, 546.6/80, 546.6/82, 546.6/89, 546.6/90, 546.6/91, and 546.6/118; caja 717, expedientes 546.6/132, 546.6/151, 546.6/177, 546.6/221, 546.6/228, and 546.6/235; caja 718, expedientes 546.6/267, 546.6/268, 546.6/269, 546.6/323, and 546.6/344; caja 719, expedientes 546.6/376, 546.6/390, and 546.6/406; caja 720, expedientes 546.6/452, 546.6/466, 546.6/467, 546.6/468, 546.6/492, 546.6/502, and 546.6/541; caja 721, expedientes 546.6/719 and 546.6/728; caja 722, expedientes 546.6/735, 546.6/822, and 546.6/851; caja 723, expedientes 546.6/892 and 546.6/984; caja 727, expediente 548.1/23. And AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expedientes 6-7; caja 3, expedientes 8-10; caja 4, expedientes 11-15; caja 5, expedientes 16-19; caja 6, expedientes 20-22.

⁸⁰ Lic. Silvano Barba González, Informe Anual del C. Gobernador, February 1, 1943, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-1-943, serie Política Estatal y Nacional, caja 160, inventario 3506, fojas 7-8.

proscription on Jalisco braceros that went into effect in mid-1943 remained in place until 1946, in large part because Governor Marcelino García Barragán continued to refuse to accept allotments of bracero cards well after the governors of Guanajuato and Michoacán had accepted them.

Why was García Barragán so opposed to bracero migration? Around the time the ban on Jalisco braceros went into effect, he noted that he had “discretely but effectively” aided a campaign to discourage “uncontrolled departures.”⁸¹ As in Guanajuato and Michoacán, the governor was worried about a possible shortage of agricultural workers. When federal Labor Secretary Francisco Trujillo Gurría asked in March 1946 if Jalisco could spare any workers for the upcoming contracting period, the governor cited his desire to “intensify” local agricultural production and requested that his state continue to be excluded from the Bracero Program.⁸² Guanajuato Governor Ernesto Hidalgo and Michoacán Governor José María Mendoza Pardo had similar worries when Contracting Centers opened in their states. But Hidalgo and Mendoza Pardo mostly wanted to prevent departures during critical periods of the agricultural cycle, and neither of them ever explicitly told federal officials that they would not sanction the departure of braceros from their respective jurisdictions.

There may have been a more overtly political reason for García Barragán’s resistance: a growing divide between him and President Manuel Ávila Camacho. As preparations began for the 1946 presidential election, García Barragán gave his support to General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, who was campaigning against the PRI’s candidate, former federal Government Secretary Miguel Alemán. García Barragán’s support of Henríquez Guzmán sparked a political attack campaign led by Jesús González Gallo, President Ávila Camacho’s chief of staff and a candidate for Jalisco’s governorship; at one point, the federal legislature formally considered dissolving Jalisco’s government. Given this political climate, it is plausible that García Barragán was unwilling to accede to federal requests, including those concerning the Bracero Program. (Although tensions subsided once Henríquez Guzmán withdrew from the presidential race, the Jalisco legislature deposed García Barragán once Alemán and González Gallo were declared president- and governor-elect, respectively).⁸³

Predictably, given these tensions, federal authorities began overruling García Barragán’s attempts to prevent the departure of Jalisco braceros. In April 1946, Labor Secretary Trujillo Gurría, while acknowledging the governor’s concerns, informed him that President Ávila Camacho had decided to make one exception to the continued ban: 545 bracero cards were to be given to sugar mill workers that had been displaced by “inter-union” concerns.⁸⁴ The chief executive had promised that number of cards to members of the Sindicato Nacional de Obreros y Campesinos de la Industria Azucarera y Similares (which does not appear to have been affiliated with the CTM, the umbrella union linked to the ruling PRI) in the summer of 1945. However, the promise could not be fulfilled that year because the end of World War II momentarily put the Bracero Program’s continuation in doubt. In December, the union lost its registration status,

⁸¹ C. Marcelino García Barragán, Inform Circunstancial, 1943, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-1-943, serie Política Estatal y Nacional, inventario 3504, foja 9.

⁸² Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurría to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Jalisco, March 19, 1946; Gral. Brig. Marcelino García Barragán to C. Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurría, March 27, 1946; AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 52, fojas sin número.

⁸³ José María Muriá, *Jalisco: Historia breve*, 4th edition (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica; El Colegio de México; Fideicomiso Histórico de las Américas, 2011), 170-171.

⁸⁴ Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurría to C. Gobernador del Estado, April 27, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 52, foja sin número.

although it was decided that all the agreements it had entered into would be honored.⁸⁵ The 545 cards, as well as an additional 67 meant for textile workers, were sent to Guadalajara for distribution in June; workers from the municipalities of Acatlán, Atotonilco el Alto, Cocula, Guadalajara, Tala, and Villa Corona received their cards on June 24.⁸⁶

This was not the only exception to the Jalisco proscription made in 1946. In May, it was determined that 2,000 bracero eligibility cards would be distributed among unemployed members of the Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Azucarera y Similares de la República Mexicana (STIASRM), which was affiliated with the CTM.⁸⁷ On June 10 in Ameca, a sugar-growing community in the Valles region west of Guadalajara, federal- and state-level Labor Secretariat officials distributed the eligibility cards. Workers from the municipalities of Ameca, Tamazula, and Tecalitlán were given cards, although only 1,732 of the allotment of 2,000 were ultimately distributed. The vast majority of the selected workers, 1,144, were members of STIASRM Section 2, which represented the workers of Ameca's San Francisco mill. The chosen braceros then traveled to the Irapuato Contracting Center to receive their contracts before leaving for the United States.⁸⁸

After the Ameca distribution, which in the end preceded the distribution of the 545 cards that were initially promised to unionized sugar workers, Governor Marcelino García Barragán made his displeasure known. In a June 21 letter to President Manuel Ávila Camacho, García Barragán noted that the only reason he had agreed to the distribution of the 2,000 cards was because the union had directly intervened not just with him, but also with the president and the federal Labor Secretariat. Since the entire allotment of 2,000 cards had not been distributed, García Barragán asked Ávila Camacho not to authorize the contracting of any more Jalisco braceros.⁸⁹ But, as noted above, the federal government went ahead with the distribution of close to 600 cards in Guadalajara just three days after García Barragán sent his letter. Perhaps because he was upset at his wishes being disregarded, the governor did not send any state officials to assist during the Guadalajara selection process.⁹⁰

Why did the federal government decide to send bracero cards specifically to unionized sugar workers? Historian Michael Snodgrass offers one explanation. In his recent examination of the Bracero Program, he argues that the exemptions granted to Jalisco sugar workers during this period were the result of official, national-level patronage networks. Put another way,

⁸⁵ Summary of a May 18, 1946 letter from Jorge Gutiérrez, Martín Vázquez, and José Terrones García to C. Presidente, May 23, 1946, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 794, expediente 546.6/120-13, fojas sin número.

⁸⁶ Memorandum sobre la contratación de braceros en Jalisco, undated and unsigned; Relación de los braceros en la ciudad de Guadalajara el día 24 de junio de 1946 correspondientes a la sección número 3 del Sindicato de Obreros y Campesinos de la Industria Azucarera y Similares de la República Mexicana, June 24, 1946; AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 12, fojas sin número.

⁸⁷ Gral. Brig. Marcelino García Barragán to C. Secretario del Trabajo y Previsión Social, May 16, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 52, foja sin número.

⁸⁸ Manuel Rosado Torres, Pablo Hernández S., Filemón Avalos Osorio, and Lucio Pérez Pacheco, Relación de los Braceros seleccionados en la ciudad de Ameca, Jalisco, pertenecientes a la Sección 2 del Sindicato de Azucareros verificada el día 10 de junio de 1946; Pablo Hernández to C. Jefe del Departamento del Trabajo y Previsión Social, June 19, 1946; AHJ, fondo Gobernación sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 52, fojas sin número. There are two separate lists compiled by Rosado Torres, Hernández, Avalos Osorio, and Pérez Pacheco. One list includes 241 workers, and the other includes 903. However, the list of 903 appears to be incomplete.

⁸⁹ Gral. Brig. Marcelino García Barragán to C. Gral. de Div. Manuel Ávila Camacho, June 21, 1946, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 794, expediente 546.6/120-13, foja sin número.

⁹⁰ Memorandum sobre la contratación de braceros, undated and unsigned, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 12, foja sin número.

bracero cards and contracts were rewards for the ruling party's allies in the labor movement.⁹¹ While there is merit to Snodgrass's argument, I do not believe it captures the entirety of the situation. For one thing, the 545 sugar workers that received cards in Guadalajara in June 1946 belonged to a union that had lost its registry and had not been affiliated with the CTM. Further, as we will see in Chapter Three, municipal-level officials were more likely than their national-level counterparts to use bracero cards as a political reward. In short, attributing the sugar workers' exemption to national-level patronage is an oversimplification.

Snodgrass's interpretation also overlooks another crucial factor: Jalisco sugar workers were asking to leave as braceros. In June 1945, a group of would-be braceros from Tamazula, a sugar-growing community in the mountainous region south of Lake Chapala, traveled to Mexico City in hopes of personally meeting with Ávila Camacho and convincing him to allow them to migrate. Although the prospective migrants did not belong to a union, they did work in the sugar industry, and they could not comprehend why they were being denied the right to migrate when rural workers from other states were already receiving bracero contracts.⁹² One month later, Salvador Guzmán and other seasonally unemployed STIASRM members from Vista Hermosa's Santa Cruz mill, also in the municipality of Tamazula, wrote to the president to request bracero cards.⁹³ And in April 1946, one month before the federal government granted an exemption to STIASRM members, unionized workers from Tecalitlán's Guadalupe mill asked Ávila Camacho for bracero cards.⁹⁴ Thus, the exemption allowed President Ávila Camacho to directly placate workers who were requesting contracts, to reward union members, and undermine a governor aligned with his rivals.

Following Governor García Barragán's ouster, the Bracero Program started to expand in Jalisco. In 1947, the federal government allotted the state 3,000 bracero cards; these were intended for rural workers who were not members of the sugar workers' unions.⁹⁵ However, thanks to the lobbying efforts of STIASRM leader J. Félix Ponce, Jalisco's unionized sugar workers still received their own separate allotment of bracero cards in 1947, meaning that there were effectively two Bracero Programs in the state that year.⁹⁶ At least 750 cards were distributed among the member workers of 18 Jalisco sections. The plurality of the cards went to workers in Ameca mills.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Snodgrass, "The Golden Age of Charrismo," 189-190.

⁹² Crescenciano Madrigal and others to C. Gral. de Div. Manuel Ávila Camacho, June 18, 1945, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 794, expediente 546.6/120-13, foja sin número.

⁹³ Summary of a letter from Salvador Guzmán, Felipe Godoy, and others to C. Presidente, June 2, 1945, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 794, expediente 546.6/120-13, foja sin número. The original date of the letter was not recorded in the summary. Guzmán and the petitioners belonged to Section 81 of the STIASRM.

⁹⁴ Summary of an April 12, 1946 from Sind. de Trab. de la Ind. Azucarera y Sim. de la R.M., Secc. 1 to C. Presidente, April 15, 1946, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 795, expediente 546.6/120-15, foja sin número.

⁹⁵ Contratación de Braceros en el Estado, undated, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 33, fojas sin número. Although this document is undated, the information provided matches that of other documents pertaining to the 1947 contracting period.

⁹⁶ Zeferino Torres to C. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, May 21, 1947, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 40, foja sin número.

⁹⁷ Azucareros, undated, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 40, foja sin número. Ameca sugar workers received 221 bracero cards. Although undated, this document is included in the collection that details the 1947 contracting period. The list details the distribution of 777 bracero cards among 18 sugar workers' union sections; it also stated that there were 123 alternate braceros. In Zeferino Torres's letter cited above, Torres stated that J. Félix Ponce had secured 750 bracero cards for union members.

As for the 3,000 bracero cards meant for non-unionized rural workers, Jalisco's government divided that allotment among the state's municipalities. Virtually all of Jalisco's municipalities, 122 out of 124, sent braceros to the United States in 1947.⁹⁸ As in Guanajuato, and as would eventually occur in Michoacán, municipal presidents were charged with selecting braceros via random drawings.⁹⁹ But unlike Guanajuato and Michoacán, no one region of Jalisco received the majority of the cards. The plurality – 836, or 28 percent – went to the municipalities of the Lerma-Chapala Basin. A similar proportion – 786, or 26 percent – was sent to the municipalities of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area; Guadalajara's municipal government received 428 of these cards.¹⁰⁰ This resulted in a bracero card distribution pattern that closely reflected the state's population distribution. According to the 1950 Population Census, 32 percent of the state's population lived in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area, while 30 percent lived in the Lerma-Chapala Basin.¹⁰¹ It is not clear where these braceros received their contracts, though it is likely that they traveled to a Contracting Center in a neighboring state, like the unionized sugar workers who migrated in 1946, or the Contracting Center that was established in the Guadalajara suburb of Tlaquepaque.

Jalisco authorities' decision to distribute bracero cards liberally among organized and non-organized workers is somewhat surprising, since they could have used the Bracero Program as a response to the hoof-and-mouth disease outbreak, like their counterparts in Michoacán did. The disease had spread into Jalisco by 1947 and it was causing the same type of negative consequences experienced in Michoacán. In the Lerma-Chapala Basin municipality of Degollado, 42 percent of local livestock became infected and was then destroyed via the rifle sanitario.¹⁰² The state government responded by implementing quarantine measures to slow the spread the disease and barring the transportation of livestock in 16 municipalities in August. In December, Governor Jesús González Gallo, afraid that pilgrimages to the Catholic shrine in San Juan de los Lagos would exacerbate the outbreak, discouraged journeys to that city.¹⁰³ But the La Barca Chamber of Commerce complained that the quarantine measures were preventing agricultural supplies from reaching areas affected by the outbreak, thus harming production.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Contratación de Braceros en el Estado, undated, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 33, fojas sin número. These documents detail how many bracero cards each municipal government received. Although it is undated, the numbers listed in it match those in the letters sent by municipal presidents to the state government concerning the number of braceros selected in each jurisdiction. The municipalities that did not send braceros to the U.S. in 1947 were El Salto and Ojuelos de Jalisco.

⁹⁹ Felipe Sánchez Espinoza to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, May 11, 1947, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 33, foja sin número.

¹⁰⁰ Contratación de Braceros en el Estado, undated, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 33, fojas sin número.

¹⁰¹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Séptimo Censo General de Población, 6 de Junio de 1950: Estado de Jalisco* (México: 1952), 24-29. Jalisco's total population was 1,746,777; 520,366 lived in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, while 554,604 lived in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area. I have chosen to use the data from the 1950 Population Census to better account for population growth that occurred between the 1940 Population Census and 1947.

¹⁰² Lic. Óscar Flores to C. Lic. Roberto Amorós G., September 9, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 290, expediente 425.5/2-13, fojas sin número.

¹⁰³ Dr. Federico Rubio Lozano to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, August 25, 1947; Lic. Carlos G. Guzmán to C. Secretario de Gobernación, December 1, 1947; AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 37, fojas sin número. The affected municipalities were Arandas, Ayo el Chico (now Ayotlán), Degollado, Guadalajara, Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos, Jamay, Jocotepec, La Barca, Poncitlán, Quitupan, Teocuitatlán, Tlaquepaque, Tototlán, Tuxcueca, Valle de Juárez, and Zapotlanejo.

¹⁰⁴ Summary of an April 21, 1947 letter from Cámara de Comercio de La Barca, Jal. to C. Presidente, April 25, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 290, expediente 425.5/2-13, foja sin número.

And others who had been negatively impacted by the disease – such as Martín Campos of Poncitlán, whose livestock had been destroyed, and the workers of Ocotlán’s Nestlé facility, where production ground to a halt in early 1948 due to a lack of milk – began requesting bracero contracts.¹⁰⁵

Jalisco officials may have decided to forego using the Bracero Program as a response to the hoof-and-mouth disease outbreak because of political considerations. As noted above, Jesús González Gallo was elected governor after a contentious dispute between his predecessor and the federal government. Distributing bracero cards state-wide among both organized and non-organized workers immediately differentiated González Gallo from Marcelino García Barragán, who had opposed the departure of any rural workers from the state. It likely also helped the new governor secure the loyalty of the state’s municipal presidents and of union leaders who in the past had bypassed state officials to take their demands directly to federal authorities.

Tasking municipal presidents with recruiting and selecting non-organized rural workers also kept the state government from becoming entangled in local-level conflicts. Although García Barragán had been deposed because of his disagreements with national-level leaders, there were indicators that intervening in municipal-level politics could be just as risky for Jalisco officials as it was for their counterparts in Guanajuato, where the governor had been ousted after his failed intervention in León’s municipal election. In July 1947, a group of cattle ranchers from the Lerma-Chapala Basin sent President Miguel Alemán and Jalisco’s state government a blistering complaint about the official response to the hoof-and-mouth disease outbreak. The letter writers were convinced that the outbreak was part of a broader Mexican-U.S. conspiracy, and they were incensed about the numerous abuses that had already been committed by the personnel responding to the crisis, including the theft of animals and food and the levying of bribes. The destruction of livestock, including oxen used for plowing fields and sowing crops, had left the local population “miserable, hungry, and unable to perform agricultural work.” To prevent further abuses, hundreds of cattle ranchers had enthusiastically armed themselves to defend their interests and ensure that no more livestock were slaughtered. The letter writers then warned President Alemán to take stock of the consequences of his actions and avoid the trajectory of Governor Jesús González Gallo, who had promised to transform the state government but had instead become more corrupt than Marcelino García Barragán. Finally, the writers cited the Cristero Rebellion’s thousands of casualties as an example of the damage Jalisco rural workers could inflict when they felt that the government was disrespecting them.¹⁰⁶

The specter of renewed conservative-related violence – Jalisco, particularly the areas of the state in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, had been a Cristero stronghold during the late 1920s, and there had been 136 Sinarquista demonstrations in that region between 1939 and 1943 – may have been enough to convince Governor González Gallo not to intervene directly in the bracero

¹⁰⁵ Summary of a September 1, 1947 letter from Martín Campos L. to C. Presidente, September 23, 1947, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 290, expediente expediente 425.5/2-13, foja sin número; J. Jesús Hernández to C. Lic. J. González Gallo, January 30, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 6, foja sin número.

¹⁰⁶ Los ganaderos de los Altos de Jalisco, Los ganaderos de La Barca, Jal., Los ganaderos de Ocotlán, Jal., Los ganaderos de Sahuayo, Los ganaderos de Jiquilpan, Los ganaderos de Poncitlán, Jal., Tototlán, Zapotlán del Rey, Atotonilco, Jal., San José de Gracia, San Luis Soyatlán, Tizapan, Jal., Mazamitla, Jal., Quitúpan, Jal., etc., etc., etc. to C. Presidente de la República, July 24, 1947, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 37, fojas sin número.

recruitment and selection process.¹⁰⁷ This lingering conservative discontent also influenced how many bracero cards some municipal governments received. As noted above, the Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities received the plurality of Jalisco's allotment of bracero cards. The municipality in the region that received the most cards to distribute was the most populous one, Tepatitlán.¹⁰⁸ However, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, conservative opposition to the agrarian reform in Tepatitlán had created a large population of non-ejidatarios, the very type of rural workers who were eligible to migrate as braceros. The legacy of conservative opposition may have even pushed Tepatitlán rural workers to the United States before their departure as braceros was officially sanctioned. When Governor González Gallo asked the state's municipal presidents for brief general reports in the summer of 1947, Tepatitlán Municipal President Manuel González Vargas stated that he could not provide an accurate account of the municipality's population because of high local emigration rates.¹⁰⁹

In 1948, the federal government allotted 4,000 bracero cards to Jalisco.¹¹⁰ As in the previous year, state officials instructed their municipal counterparts to recruit and select rural workers who were interested in migrating; these workers had to be healthy, non-ejidatarios of prime working age (this requirement had presumably also been in place in 1947).¹¹¹ And also as in the previous year, the regions of the state that received the most cards were the Lerma-Chapala Basin and the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (30 and 31 percent, respectively).¹¹²

But there was one significant change in 1948: despite the STIASRM's national-level leadership requesting 3,000 bracero cards for Jalisco's organized sugar workers in April, the union no longer received a separate card allotment.¹¹³ This policy change surprised both local union leaders and municipal presidents in the sugar growing areas. In late May, Roberto Ramírez, the secretary general of STIASRM Section 47, which represented workers in Tecalitlán's La Purísima mill, complained about his workers no longer being given preference; Ramírez did not mind that municipal presidents were now in charge of selecting migrant workers, but he did want them to include unionized workers in the lists of prospective braceros.¹¹⁴ Tecalitlán Municipal President Ezequiel Guardado responded to these complaints by implying that it was too late to include sugar workers in the drawing, since he had been under the

¹⁰⁷ Olivera Sedano, *Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929*, 158; Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu*, Tomo I, 315.

¹⁰⁸ Contratación de Braceros en el Estado, undated, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 33, fojas sin número; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Séptimo Censo General de Población, 6 de Junio de 1950: Estado de Jalisco*, 24-29. Tepatitlán's population in 1950 was 52,641. Tepatitlán received 74 bracero cards in 1947; only Guadalajara (428) and Ameca (100) received more cards that year.

¹⁰⁹ Dr. Manuel González Vargas to C. Gobernador, June 11, 1947, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1947, caja 41, fojas sin número. Dr. González Vargas estimated that the municipal population was between 45,000 and 50,000.

¹¹⁰ Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo to C. José Reyes Nava, October 6, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 14, foja sin número.

¹¹¹ Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo to C. Presidente Municipal, May 6, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 13, fojas sin número.

¹¹² Bracero card distribution figures are in AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, cajas 6-7, 11-14. The state received 4,000 bracero cards, but the documentary evidence only details how 3,178 cards were distributed. The Guadalajara Metropolitan Area received 977 cards; the Lerma-Chapala Basin received 966 cards.

¹¹³ Juan González B. to C. Ministro de la Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, April 23, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 14, fojas sin número.

¹¹⁴ Roberto Ramírez to C. Gobernador del Estado, May 27, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 14, foja sin número.

impression that union members would be given a “special place” in the state’s bracero contingent when he compiled the list of prospective braceros.¹¹⁵

Why did the state government stop granting the sugar workers’ unions their own allotment of bracero cards? Unlike 1946, when union lobbying and the conflict between President Manuel Ávila Camacho and Governor Marcelino García Barragán prompted the federal government to sanction the migration of sugar workers, federal officials were no longer willing to intercede on behalf of organized workers. When federal legislator Vidal Díaz Muñoz requested contracts for over 1,000 unemployed sugar workers in May, federal Government Secretariat official Horacio Terán simply forwarded the request to Governor Jesús González Gallo. Terán then reminded González Gallo that recruiting and selecting braceros was the state government’s responsibility, thus implying that the federal government would not object to whatever decision the state government made regarding the request.¹¹⁶ And while, as noted above, local section leaders did demand that municipal presidents include member workers in the lists of prospective braceros, the end of the union’s allotment did not provoke unrest that could then threaten González Gallo’s administration or draw the attention of federal authorities.

Jalisco’s state government continued delegating the task of recruiting and selecting braceros to its municipal counterparts for the duration of the Bracero Program, and the Lerma-Chapala Basin and the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area continued receiving the plurality of the state’s bracero cards.¹¹⁷ This status quo coincided with Jalisco officials implicitly welcoming the departure of braceros from the state. When federal Government Secretariat official Enrique Rodríguez Cano asked Governor Jesús González Gallo in July 1950 if the Bracero Program was causing population declines or rural labor shortages, state Government Secretary Carlos Guzmán replied that there were no Bracero Program-related population declines or rural labor shortages in the state.¹¹⁸ This acceptance of emigration may have been an indication that Governor González Gallo and President Miguel Alemán had a better working relationship than their respective predecessors (as noted above, President Manuel Ávila Camacho sanctioned the departure of Jalisco braceros in 1946 to undermine Governor Marcelino García Barragán). Or perhaps it was an indication that Jalisco authorities recognized that the state’s rural workers were interested in migrating, and that it would be best to attempt to regulate the migratory flow with the assistance of municipal officials. Regardless of the reasons for this changed attitude, the center-western state that had most fiercely resisted the departure of rural workers stopped opposing migration altogether.

Conclusion

I showed in this chapter how the state governments of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán all came to administer the Bracero Program in such a way that the state’s municipal

¹¹⁵ Ezequiel Guardado to C. Srio. General de Gobierno, May 27, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 14, foja sin número.

¹¹⁶ Lic. Horacio Terán to Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, May 17, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 14, fojas sin número. Díaz Muñoz lobbied on behalf of at least 1,420 sugar workers. Unfortunately, three pages of the list Díaz Muñoz submitted are missing.

¹¹⁷ AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1952, caja 17. This box contains correspondence and contracting figures for 1952. There were at least 9,025 bracero cards distributed in Jalisco in 1952; 3,245 (36 percent) were sent to the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area; 2,395 (27 percent) were sent to the Lerma-Chapala Basin.

¹¹⁸ Enrique Rodríguez Cano to C. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, July 24, 1950; Lic. Carlos G. Guzmán to C. Enrique Rodríguez Cano, July 29, 1950; AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1950, caja 23, fojas sin número.

governments became the entities responsible for recruiting and selecting braceros. At first glance, this replicated the federal government's behavior, which delegated recruitment and selection responsibilities to their state counterparts in the mid-1940s. However, there was one critical difference: the federal government abdicated those responsibilities after it failed to centralize the distribution of bracero contracts in Mexico City, whereas Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán authorities never attempted to directly control the process.

The center-western state governments never tried to centralize the bracero recruitment and selection process because state-level officials determined that their municipal counterparts were better positioned to identify who would benefit most from migrating and how these departures would affect the regional agrarian economy. But also, this decentralization ensured that any political conflicts caused by the recruitment and selection process would remain confined to the municipal level, thus reducing the risk of federal intervention in state-level politics. Any popular unrest caused by the potentially fraught and difficult selection of migrant workers would be directed at municipal officials. Thus, the center-western governors had one less reason to fear being removed by the federal government.

Decentralization and delegation did not mean that the center-western state governments were powerless during the Bracero Program. State authorities still decided which regions of the state received bracero cards to distribute and how many. Regional officials used this power to respond to demand for bracero contracts – in the case of Guanajuato – ameliorate the effects of ecological disasters – in the case of Michoacán in 1947 – or shore up political support, as Jalisco Governor Jesús González Gallo did in 1947 when he distributed bracero cards liberally throughout the state and continued a special exemption that the federal government had granted to organized sugar workers the previous year.

Still, on balance the center-western state governments were extremely cautious in the way they organized the bracero recruitment and selection process. Because they did not want to be held responsible for agricultural production shortfalls or popular unrest, the task was delegated to municipal governments. We do not know if any governor ever had a mind to alter the procedure first used in Guanajuato in the mid-1940s, but if he had, there is a good chance that he would have been unable to do so. Such an attempt would have likely met with political resistance from the center-west's municipal governments. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán municipal officials, while often embroiled in the political conflicts sparked by the bracero recruitment and selection process, benefitted from the Bracero Program in a number of ways, and they were unwilling to give up the recruitment and selection responsibilities that had been delegated to them. Put another way: while the governors did not want to directly select braceros, municipal presidents absolutely did.

Chapter Three

“A Mockery of Responsibility”: The Municipal Administration of the Bracero Program

In May 1963, Ezequiel Víctor, Luis Oseguera, and Mariano Martínez – the ejido president, ejido secretary, and security chief, respectively, of Las Fuentes, Michoacán – wrote to Governor Agustín Arriaga Rivera. The community officials were unhappy with Ecuandureo Municipal President Miguel Arellano’s actions during the most recent bracero recruitment and selection period. Instead of selecting braceros via a random drawing, Arellano had sold bracero cards to individuals who did not have a socioeconomic need to migrate. Worse, Arellano had abused his authority and also given cards to individuals who were not members of the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). The residents of Las Fuentes would not have had an issue if Arellano had held a drawing for the bracero cards and selected rural workers who actually had a need to migrate. But Arellano had deceived them, and the Las Fuentes officials asked the governor to hold the municipal president accountable. They also requested that the next allotment of bracero cards be sent directly to the community instead of the municipal government.¹

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, the task of recruiting and selecting braceros in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán came to be delegated to municipal governments, who were instructed to distribute bracero cards via random drawings. At first glance, the recruitment and selection procedure was very straightforward. After being informed how many bracero cards they would receive, municipal governments announced Bracero Program-related information – such as the contracting dates, the sites of the Contracting Centers, and the requirements prospective braceros had to meet – via broadsides; some municipal officials also used loudspeakers mounted on cars were to publicize the Bracero Program.² Once the recruitment guidelines were announced, municipal presidents would draft lists of prospective braceros. The drawings would be held after the lists had been compiled, and selected braceros would travel to the appropriate Contracting Center. However, the accusations against Miguel Arellano indicate that our understanding of the municipal-level administration of the Bracero Program cannot be reduced to a simple cataloguing of steps, and that other factors may have been considered when selecting migrant workers.

I show in this chapter that municipal presidents were not impartial selectors and that they used the Bracero Program to secure their own power and to personally profit. Municipal officials sold bracero cards, gave cards to political allies and sympathizers, removed political opponents by recruiting them as migrant workers, and, more subtly, used the program to ease agrarian pressures and ameliorate rural conflicts. During the final years of the Bracero Program, local officials found a new way of leveraging the Bracero Program for their own benefit: they increasingly lobbied for bracero cards that would go to rural workers who had pledged to invest their earnings in local material improvement projects or who wanted to remedy a specific

¹ Lic. José L. Flores to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, June 22, 1963; Ezequiel Víctor R., Luis Oseguera H., and Mariano Martínez C. to C. Lic. Agustín Arriaga Rivera, May 23, 1963; AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 11, fojas 24, 26-27. Flores’s June 22 letter is a transcription of the original letter from Las Fuentes. The copy of the original letter stored in the archive is incomplete.

² Rubén Silva to C. Francisco Méndez, April 7, 1945, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 247; Roberto Pérez Magaña and Alfonso Álvares R., Aviso Importante a los Braceros, April 5, 1947, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 66.

malady, while in reality they were profiting from these requests. These actions sparked local-level political conflicts that at times threatened to destabilize municipal governments. Despite these conflicts, the benefits of the Bracero Program were such that municipal officials zealously guarded their control of the recruitment and selection process.

As we saw in Chapter One, the federal government delegated recruitment and selection responsibilities to state officials after its centralization attempt failed. However, as shown in Chapter Two, Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán authorities never attempted to centralize this process. Rather, a mix of practical concerns – the acknowledgement that municipal governments were better positioned to gauge how the Bracero Program would affect agricultural production – and political calculations – the risks associated with intervening in local affairs – prompted all three state governments to delegate the task to municipal officials. With federal- and state-level officials limiting their Bracero Program-related activities to determining which states and municipalities could send braceros to the United States, municipal governments could tailor the bracero recruitment and selection process to meet their particular goals. Thus, center-western municipal officials became the ultimate arbiters of one of the Bracero Program’s most critical facets.

This picture complicates Deborah Cohen’s recent interpretation of the bracero recruitment and selection process. In her study of the Bracero Program in Durango, Cohen, while acknowledging that local-level officials in that state profited from the sale of bracero contracts, focuses on ways that the selection process allowed the national state to consolidate its power. Specifically, the public spectacle of the random drawings and the distribution of contracts, events that were often hosted at sports stadiums, symbolically made braceros into modernizing agents who would transform the entire country through their exemplary representation of Mexico abroad and sending back of remittances.³ But I will show that the level of government that benefitted the most from the Bracero Program was the municipal one. My argument also complicates Michael Snodgrass’s claim that the political use of the Bracero Program focused on awarding contracts to adherents of the ruling PRI, since I demonstrate that municipal authorities could use the program to achieve a number of goals.⁴

This chapter begins with an examination of the sale of bracero cards. Next I focus on how municipal governments used the Bracero Program to reward political allies and individuals that had close ties to municipal officials, and on how the program could be used as both a political and agrarian safety valve. I then discuss the apparently altruistic bracero card requests made by municipal governments during the program’s final years. The chapter concludes with an examination of municipal officials’ efforts to resist any encroachment on their Bracero Program-related responsibilities.

The Sale of Bracero Cards

Center-western municipal presidents started profiting from the sale of bracero cards almost as soon as they were tasked with distributing them. In late July 1944, Ignacio Puente of San Francisco del Rincón, Guanajuato complained that the municipal president there had not selected braceros via a random drawing. Instead, the local government had been influenced by “ill-intentioned” individuals, such as the municipal secretary, who sold individual bracero cards for anywhere between \$50 and \$100 pesos. This “mockery” of the responsibility that the state

³ Cohen, *Braceros*, 90-97.

⁴ Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 94.

government had entrusted to San Francisco del Rincón's government distressed Puente, and he asked President Manuel Ávila Camacho to intervene directly and resolve the matter.⁵

There were soon similar allegations in nearby Romita. During the first week of August, Aventino Guerrero accused Romita's municipal president of giving that municipality's allotment of bracero cards to several *coyotes* (a Spanish term for human smugglers) who then sold the documents for \$100 pesos.⁶ Two weeks later, Carlos Luna Rodríguez, Zeferino Reyes Padilla, and Ignacio Rodríguez Ramos complained that the municipal president and another ayuntamiento (municipal council) official had sold them bracero cards for \$50 pesos. But the screening officials in Irapuato rejected Reyes Padilla and Rodríguez Ramos because they did not meet the age requirements, and Luna Rodríguez was deemed unhealthy. The three prospective braceros believed that Romita's officials had acted in bad faith, especially after they learned that the sale of bracero cards was prohibited, and they demanded that their money be returned.⁷

Municipal officials found ways to profit from the sale of bracero cards even when they were not directly tasked with recruiting and selecting migrant workers. As noted in Chapter Two, Michoacán's government charged state legislators with distributing bracero cards in 1945. However, some of these legislators appear to have delegated selection responsibilities to the municipal presidents in their jurisdiction. In early March, Rafael Mora, the secretary general of Purépero's Cobbler's Union, complained that despite the local legislator's orders that the cards were to be distributed free of charge, municipal officials were selling bracero cards for considerable sums.⁸ That same month, Juventino Espinosa and Pedro Pérez, the *jefe de tenencia* (community chief) and *comisariado ejidal* (ejido president), respectively, of Acuitzeramo accused Ignacio Torres Espinosa – whose alternate, as discussed in Chapter Two, was accused by Zamora residents of selling bracero cards – of collaborating with Tlazazalca Municipal President Roberto Cachu to sell cards for \$304 pesos. Since no rural workers from Acuitzeramo could afford that sum, no one from the community was selected as a bracero. Like San Francisco del Rincón's Ignacio Puente, Espinosa and Pérez asked the federal government to intervene and punish both Torres Espinosa and Cachu.⁹

However, these demands for punishment and restitution went unanswered. Ignacio Puente, Aventino Guerrero, Rafael Mora, and the Acuitzeramo officials initially sent their complaints to the federal government. But federal officials, who had already divorced themselves from the recruitment and selection process, simply forwarded the accusations to state-level authorities. And state authorities, who were wary of the dangers of intervening in municipal-level affairs, simply reminded their municipal counterparts that bracero cards were to be distributed free of charge.¹⁰ The few occasions when state governments launched inquiries or

⁵ Lic. Luis Fernández del Campo to C. Gobernador del Estado de Guanajuato, August 15, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 90, fojas sin número.

⁶ Lic. Luis Fernández del Campo to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado de Guanajuato, August 7, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 89, foja sin número.

⁷ Carlos Luna Rodríguez, Zeferino Reyes Padilla, and Ignacio Rodríguez Ramos to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, August 22, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 92, foja sin número.

⁸ Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurriá to Sr. Lic. José M. Mendoza Pardo, March 24, 1945, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 179.

⁹ Lic. Francisco Trujillo Gurriá to Lic. José M. Mendoza Pardo, March 14, 1945, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 153.

¹⁰ Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to Director Luis Fernández del Campo, August 22, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 90, foja sin número.

attempted to discipline municipal governments did not yield tangible results. Michoacán officials forwarded Rafael Mora's complaint to the state attorney general's office, which then informed the legal authorities in Zamora, but there is no record of any further investigation.¹¹ And Romita's municipal president was instructed by state officials to return the monies he had collected from Carlos Luna Rodríguez, Zeferino Reyes Padilla, and Ignacio Rodríguez Ramos, but even these orders were ultimately ignored. One month after their initial complaint, Luna Rodríguez and Reyes Padilla traveled to Guanajuato City to personally meet with state officials and renew their complaint; there is no record of their monies returned or of Romita officials suffering any negative consequences because of their actions.¹²

This impunity may have encouraged municipal presidents to continue selling bracero cards (as I will show below, the sale of cards continued until the end of the Bracero Program). But why did municipal authorities sell these documents to begin with? In his examination of post-1940 taxation policy, Benjamin Smith offers one explanation. He argues that tax reforms and the increased funneling of revenues towards urban services prompted rural governments to fund their activities through the collection of bribes.¹³ However, I have found no evidence that the monies collected through the sale of bracero cards were ever invested in official municipal-level projects, indicating that the officials who sold cards profited more than the municipalities, and that the practice was simply a form of local-level corruption that federal and state authorities tolerated because of their unwillingness to intervene in the bracero recruitment and selection process.

This tolerated corruption also had an unintended consequence: it pushed center-western rural workers to migrate outside the parameters of the Bracero Program. In his examination of emigration from the Jalisco municipality of Arandas, David Fitzgerald notes that prospective braceros there knew that they had to pay bribes to secure cards, and that they willingly paid the fees; the 12 former Arandas braceros Fitzgerald spoke to all admitted that they had not received their cards through the formal selection process. But others were wary of paying municipal officials, especially since there had been instances where payments did not secure a bracero card. Some Arandas rural workers decided that hiring the services of a coyote was a better option than bribing municipal officials. One man who made nine trips to the United States during the Bracero Program's final decade stated that he arranged his journeys with coyotes because dealing with municipal authorities did not guarantee that he would receive a bracero card and because he did not lose time with coyotes who were essentially offering the same service as the municipal government.¹⁴

The Bracero Program as a Political Reward

Center-western municipal officials also used bracero cards as a political reward. While there is no record of municipal presidents ever exchanging bracero cards for votes, they would

¹¹ Lic. Luis M. Moreno to Ciudadano Procurador General de Justicia, March 27, 1945; Lic. Francisco Mora Plancarte to Ciudadano Agente del Ministerio Público, March 28, 1945; AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, fojas 180-181.

¹² Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, August 26, 1944; Memorandum, September 18, 1944; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 92, fojas sin número.

¹³ Smith, "Building a State on the Cheap," 267-268. Smith argues that tax revenues were invested in urban projects to limit the possibilities of tax protests.

¹⁴ Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants*, 51-52.

give cards to other municipal-level officials, political allies, and personal friends. For example, in February 1945, Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato's municipal president tasked Eulalio Flores with selecting names during the bracero card drawing. Flores was the Municipal Delegate in Xoconoxtle el Grande; he, J. Ascención Flores, and Juventino García had been heard boasting before the drawing that they had already secured cards (it is not clear if these latter two individuals were affiliated with the municipal government). On the day of the drawing, 20 rural workers from Xoconoxtle were selected as braceros. The incident prompted 13 prospective braceros to ask the federal Labor Secretariat to intervene.¹⁵ However, there is no record of federal officials responding to the complaint.

In May 1947, a resident of La Barca, Jalisco who refused to give his name due to fear of reprisals wrote to Governor Jesús González Gallo to complain about how Municipal President Rafael Rico had behaved during the bracero selection. According to the letter writer, Rico delegated the task of selecting braceros to the “thieving vampires” who were members of his administration. Rather than selecting rural workers interested in migrating, the municipal “mafia” gave the cards to relatives and friends. One municipal official, Alfredo Lial, gave cards to a *compadre* (a fictive co-parent) and a local shoe-shiner who paid a bribe. Another official, Calletano Villanueva (sic) gave cards to relatives of his in San José de las Moras. The writer then requested González Gallo to intervene and put an end to these activities.¹⁶

But like his federal counterparts, González Gallo declined to intervene. And without the threat of intervention, municipal officials felt no need to conceal their activities from state-level authorities. In May 1948, Domingo Álvarez, the municipal president of Jesús María, Jalisco, wrote to state Government Secretary Carlos Guzmán and requested five additional bracero cards to distribute (Álvarez had initially been allotted 26 cards). Álvarez planned to give the cards to “various friends” of his who had lent their services to the municipal government without remuneration; among those who would be receiving a card was an unemployed alternate member of the ayuntamiento. Álvarez informed Guzmán that if he did not receive the additional cards, he would only select 21 braceros during the drawing and give the remaining 5 cards to those individuals he was lobbying for.¹⁷ During the first week of June, Álvarez reported that he had successfully selected 26 braceros, indicating that he did not receive the additional cards he requested.¹⁸ However, there is no record of the state government protesting Álvarez's planned actions, and since municipal officials were essentially given free reign during the recruitment and selection process, the municipal president's friends were presumably among those who migrated that year.

Municipal authorities could also use the Bracero Program to attract adherents to political movements they personally supported, even when those movements opposed federal policy. In the spring of 1945, a group of prospective braceros from Tres Mezquites, Michoacán, in the municipality of Puruándiro, met with Julio Torres, the state legislator tasked with selecting braceros in that area. During the meeting, which appears to have been arranged by Prisciliano Pérez, the comisariado ejidal of Tres Mezquites, Torres sanctioned the departure of five Tres

¹⁵ Sebastián Balderas and others to C. Secretario del Trabajo y Previsión Social, February 26, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (14), expediente 2, foja sin número.

¹⁶ Unnamed to Sr. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, May 12, 1947, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-1-947, serie Política Estatal y Nacional, caja 161, inventario 3527, foja sin número.

¹⁷ Domingo Álvarez to Sr. Lic. Don Carlos G. Guzmán, May 24, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 12, foja sin número.

¹⁸ Domingo Álvarez to C. Lic. J. Jesús González Gallo, June 2, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 12, foja sin número.

Mezquites rural workers. But the would-be migrants met an unexpected roadblock: Puruándiro Municipal President Martín Arroyo was a sympathizer of the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS), the conservative organization that opposed the postrevolutionary state. Arroyo had joined forces with Aristeo Aguirre, a local Sinarquista leader based in Janamutato, to block the departure of any Puruándiro braceros who did not join the UNS; presumably Arroyo and Aguirre could do this because they had some input in the lists of eligible braceros being compiled by or sent to Torres. Since no one living in Tres Mezquites was an active Sinarquista, no one from that community could migrate as a bracero, although Arroyo and Aguirre stated that they would allow the departure of any Tres Mezquites rural worker that decided to declare their allegiance to the Sinarquista cause.¹⁹ Thus, any braceros that left Puruándiro in 1945 were presumably either active Sinarquistas or they had feigned support for the UNS.

The Bracero Program as a Safety Valve

Puruándiro officials used the Bracero Program to recruit Sinarquistas, but their counterparts in Irapuato, Guanajuato used the program to remove Sinarquistas from their jurisdiction. In June 1952, federal DIPS agent Manuel Ríos Thivol – who had been sent to Irapuato to gauge the area’s political climate in the final weeks before that year’s presidential election – observed that Irapuato’s municipal government had made a “concerted effort” to enroll active Sinarquistas in the prospective bracero lists, thus ensuring that the Sinarquistas would not pose a threat during the election.²⁰ This effort would explain why Municipal President Florentino Oliva was closely monitoring the activity at the Irapuato Contracting Center. In August, a group of Irapuato residents complained that Oliva was “wasting his time” daily at the Center and with groups of prospective braceros; as a result, other important public matters were not being attended to.²¹ The municipal president responded to these complaints by admitting that he had spent a considerable amount of time at the Contracting Center, but only to prevent fraud and other irregularities.²²

Oliva had good reason to attempt to neutralize Sinarquista activity in his jurisdiction. The conservative group had a strong presence in Irapuato: there were 25 UNS sub-committees in the municipality in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and 20,000 individuals participated in 24 UNS demonstrations in Irapuato between 1939 and 1943. Equally important, the Sinarquistas had shown themselves to be a viable electoral option throughout Guanajuato. In 1946, UNS leaders sanctioned the creation of the Partido Fuerza Popular (PFP), thus allowing Sinarquistas to directly participate in elections. Between 1947 and 1948, PFP-supported candidates competed for and won the municipal presidencies of León, Celaya, Comonfort, San Luis de la Paz, and Valle de Santiago. The party was proscribed at the end of 1948, but Sinarquismo remained

¹⁹ Prisciliano Pérez G. to C. Dip. y Lic. Julio Torres R., March 22, 1945, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 174.

²⁰ Manuel Ríos Thivol to C. Lic. Alejandro Ortega Romero, June 21, 1952, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 84, expediente 2, fojas 326-329.

²¹ Unsigned to Ciudadano Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, August 13, 1952, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.59 (17), año 1952, expediente 1, foja sin número.

²² Florentino Oliva to C. Secretario General de Gobierno, September 27, 1952, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.59 (17), año 1952, expediente 1, fojas sin número.

strong in the center-west; 60,000 Lerma-Chapala Basin Sinarquistas protested the decision when it was announced.²³

If the Sinarquistas were an electoral threat, why did Irapuato officials respond by recruiting them as braceros? I argue that they did so because the state government would not intervene during the electoral process. As discussed in Chapter Two, Governor Ernesto Hidalgo's refusal in 1945 to recognize the victory of a Sinarquista-supported candidate in León's municipal election resulted in violence and Hidalgo's ouster. After that, Guanajuato's government was wary of intervening in local matters, as demonstrated by both the PFP's electoral victories and the continued delegation of bracero recruitment and selection responsibilities. The lack of state-level intervention had a double-effect: it meant that if Municipal President Florentino Oliva wanted to minimize the Sinarquistas' electoral impact, he would have to act without the support of the state government; at the same time, it also allowed Oliva to use the Bracero Program to remove Sinarquistas from his jurisdiction.

Oliva may have been inclined to remove conservative opponents even if there had not been an election. The municipal president also had a strained relationship with members of the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). In August 1952, a group of Irapuato *Panistas* accused the municipal president of committing numerous transgressions, including spending public monies on a new car for his wife, being an accomplice to murder, and naming police and transit officials who dedicated themselves to extorting citizens, gambling, and flirting with local women.²⁴ Oliva dismissed the accusations as the frivolous work of "anonymous and eternal" malcontents, indicating that this was not the first time he had clashed with local Panistas.²⁵ Although DIPS agent Manuel Ríos Thivol noted that Irapuato's government had targeted Sinarquistas during the bracero recruitment period, it is plausible, given Oliva's rocky relationship with local Panistas, that members of that party may have also been recruited as migrant workers.

The actions of Irapuato's municipal government in 1952 seemingly corroborate an argument first made by Harry Cross and James Sandos in their 1981 study of Mexico-U.S. migration: that the Bracero Program could be used as a safety valve for political conflicts. Specifically, Cross and Sandos noted the correlation between the fact that between one-third and one-half of all bracero contracts went to Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers and the strength of the Cristero Rebellion and the Sinarquista movement in all three states to conclude that the Mexican government "exported" conservative opponents by giving them bracero contracts. But beyond noting the correlation, Cross and Sandos did not pursue this perceptive if crude safety valve hypothesis.²⁶

As noted in Chapters One and Two, conservative opposition to the postrevolutionary state did influence both the federal government's decision to funnel bracero cards to the center-west, and center-western state government's decision to funnel bracero cards to the Lerma-Chapala Basin (I will explore how this opposition influenced the demand for bracero cards in Chapter Four). However, because municipal governments were ultimately responsible for

²³ Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu*, Tomo I, 180, 313; and *La batalla del espíritu*, Tomo II, 50-52, 250-251, 269-271, 273. Until the establishment of the PFP, UNS leaders had eschewed forming a formal electoral party. However, Sinarquistas had competed for office as members of or in alliance with other conservative parties.

²⁴ Unsigned to C. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, August 2, 1952, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.59 (17), año 1952, expediente 1, fojas sin número.

²⁵ Florentino Oliva to C. Secretario General del Gobierno, September 27, 1952, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.59 (17), año 1952, expediente 1, fojas sin número.

²⁶ Cross and Sandos, *Across the Border*, 41-43.

recruiting and selecting braceros, the Bracero Program could only be used as a safety valve if municipal officials wanted to use it for that purpose. Thus, in Irapuato, where Florentino Oliva had a strained relationship with local conservatives, Sinarquistas were removed via the Bracero Program. But in Puruándiro, where the municipal government had allied itself with Sinarquista leaders, the Bracero Program was used to recruit new UNS members. And in other conservative-controlled center-western municipalities – such as those in Guanajuato that were administered by PFP members – bracero cards may have been a reward, not a punishment, for local Sinarquistas.²⁷

Irapuato officials chose to use the Bracero Program as a political safety valve. But could other center-western municipal presidents have used the program as an agrarian safety valve? The Sinarquistas were not just an electoral threat. Like the Cristeros who rebelled against the federal government during the late 1920s, they vehemently opposed the agrarian reform. Or, to be more precise, they opposed the redistribution of lands into ejidos that were ultimately owned by the state. The opposition of both former Cristeros and active Sinarquistas fueled bloody agrarian clashes throughout the region during the years of the Bracero Program.

For example, in March 1946, Jalisco officials received reports that a group from Michoacán, with the support of Ocotlán's agrarian officials, had seized control of the ejido of Margaritas, in the municipality of Atotonilco el Alto, and sparked a conflict that had already resulted in one death.²⁸ But Margaritas ejidatarios claimed that the conflict began in July 1945, when Fidencio Vázquez Cerda, the secretary general of Jalisco's League of Agrarian Communities, appointed José Trujillo – a former Cristero leader who remained an enemy of local *agrarias* (supporters of the agrarian reform) – as secretary general of the Los Altos Regional Agrarian Committee. Trujillo placed three of his allies in leadership positions in Margaritas. This prompted a formal protest, and federal agrarian official Rodolfo Álvarez del Castillo ruled that Margaritas' ejidatarios could elect a new leadership group. Trujillo declared that he would not respect Álvarez del Castillo's decision, but he was killed in a gunfight in May 1946, shortly after the election. Vázquez Cerda accused three ejidatarios from Milpillas, also in Atotonilco, of murdering Trujillo. But the Margaritas and Milpillas ejidatarios, as well as those from five other Atotonilco ejidos, claimed that the alleged murderers were innocent and that Vázquez Cerda's accusations were his revenge against agrarian communities that refused to support his political machinations.²⁹ The conflict in Margaritas continued escalating throughout the year. Shortly after Trujillo's murder, his allies successfully blocked Margaritas's newly elected leaders from formally taking power; and when the conflict spilled into the neighboring

²⁷ Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu*, Tomo II, 269-270; Loaeza, *El Partido Acción Nacional*, 216. In addition to their victories in Guanajuato, PFP-endorsed candidates won the elections in the Michoacán municipalities of Apatzingán, Ario de Rosales, La Huacana, La Piedad, Puruándiro, Tacámbaro, and Uruapan; they also won seats in Jalisco's state legislature. In December 1946, the PAN candidate won the municipal presidency of Quiroga, Michoacán.

²⁸ Lic. José Andrade González to C. Presidente Municipal de Atotonilco el Alto, March 26, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 50, foja sin número.

²⁹ Las Comunidades Agrarias del Municipio de Atotonilco el Alto, Jal., Pertenecientes a la Liga de Comunidades Agrarias y Sindicatos Campesinos del Estado (Auténtica) Miembro de la C.N.C., Se Dirigieron al Señor Presidente de la República, en los Términos que Siguen, May 14, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 6, fojas sin número. The ejidos that joined Margaritas and Milpillas in denouncing Vázquez Cerda and Trujillo were Mesa del Solorio, Santa Elena, El Refugio, El Maguey, and San Joaquín.

ejido of San Antonio at the end of the year, the federal teachers working in the municipality requested military intervention to restore the peace.³⁰

At the same time that the conflicts in Atotonilco were occurring, conservative rural workers who opposed the agrarian reform in nearby Ayo el Chico joined the Sinarquistas and began attacking a rural defense corps that local ejidatarios had organized. Regional agrarian officials believed the attacks were happening because the Sinarquistas wanted the ejidatarios forced off their lands, presumably so that they could then claim them for themselves.³¹ When La Barca's Ejido Development Chief proposed disarming the Ayo ejidatarios in March 1946, José Ávila, Ayo's comisariado ejidal, accused the La Barca official of being in league with the Sinarquistas. Ávila claimed that the disarmament proposal was a reprisal for his community's refusal to join an "anti-government" program; Ávila feared that if Ayo's ejidatarios were stripped of their weapons, the government's "true friends" would be at the mercy of the Sinarquistas.³²

But did these conflicts influence how center-western municipal governments recruited and selected braceros? In other words, did center-western municipal presidents – whether they were members of the ruling PRI or the conservative opposition PAN or PFP – use the Bracero Program to remove combative rural workers and thus ameliorate agrarian conflicts? They may have done so indirectly. There is no evidence that center-western municipal officials openly targeted rural workers involved in conflicts, but communities where conflicts occurred did receive a significant number of bracero cards. For example, in 1945, the municipal government of Pénjamo, Guanajuato distributed one-quarter of its bracero card allotment to residents of rural communities that had been documented sites of either Cristero battles or post-rebellion agrarian clashes; one-third of the contracts went to residents of the municipal seat, which had been one of the initial flashpoints of the Cristero Rebellion.³³ A similar pattern emerged in 1951 when Municipal President Pablo Herrera Vázquez compiled the lists of rural workers eligible to receive bracero contracts: nearly one-quarter were from rural communities affected by agrarian conflicts, while one-third were from the municipal seat.³⁴ This trend was even more striking that year in Irapuato, where the municipal administration that immediately preceded Florentino

³⁰ Raymundo Vega to C. Ing. y Director General de Organización Agraria Ejidal, July 5, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 6, foja sin número; J. Bathán to C. Gobernador del Estado, December 12, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 48, foja sin número.

³¹ Dip. José Ramírez Muñoz to C. Gral. Miguel Z. Martínez, February 2, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 48, foja sin número.

³² José Ávila E. to C. Coronel Jefe del 20° Batallón de Reservas, March 14, 1946, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1946, caja 48, foja sin número.

³³ Carlos Reyes Arroyo, Lista de personas que resultaron agraciadas en el Sorteo de Tarjetas de Pre-Contratación para braceros que emigrarán a trabajos agrícolas a los Estados Unidos de Norte América, efectuado en esta Ciudad el día 22 de febrero del año que corre, March 3, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (24), año 1945, expediente 2, fojas sin número. Seventy-seven of the two hundred fifty contracts allotted to Pénjamo went to residents of the municipal seat; sixty-one contracts went to residents of rural communities that had experienced agrarian conflicts.

³⁴ Pablo Herrera Vázquez, Padrón de las personas desocupadas en el Municipio de Pénjamo, Gto., formado para enviarse a la Secretaría General del Gobierno del Estado en cumplimiento de su superior telegrama fecha 23 de junio de 1951, July 31, 1951; Pablo Herrera Vázquez, Padrón adicional de las personas desocupadas en el Municipio de Pénjamo, Gto., formado para remitirse a la Secretaría General del Gobierno del Estado, August 4, 1951; Pablo Herrera V. to Ciudadano Secretario General del Gobierno, September 8, 1951; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Municipios, serie C-1, caja 259, expediente 19, fojas sin número.

Oliva's reported that 62 percent of the rural workers deemed eligible to migrate were from communities that had experienced Cristero or some form of agrarian conflict.³⁵

Other center-western municipal officials recognized that the Bracero Program could be used to respond to landlessness and crop losses. In June 1963, J. Jesús Aguilar Naranjo, the municipal president of Churintzio, Michoacán, wrote to the state government on behalf of an unspecified number of rural workers from Changuitiro. Aguilar Naranjo asked state officials to grant him a special waiver (Churintzio's government had received 50 bracero cards the previous month) to authorize the departure of prospective braceros from that community.³⁶ Aguilar Naranjo decided to reach out to state authorities after a sustained effort by Changuitiro's rural workers to secure bracero cards made it impossible for him to ignore them.³⁷ That sustained effort was a response to landlessness. In May, Cornelio Maldonado Pulido, Changuitiro's comisariado ejidal, had written the state government on behalf of six landless non-ejidatarios who were interested in migrating.³⁸ Aguilar Naranjo implied in his message that the request had also been presented to him, and he must have then decided that giving Changuitiro's landless rural workers bracero cards was the best way to assist them.

Two months after Aguilar Naranjo contacted the state government, Carlos Tamayo Valladolid, the municipal president of Ixtlán, Michoacán, requested bracero cards for the ejidatarios of four communities: La Estanzuela, Emiliano Zapata, Rancho Nuevo, and Valenciano. According to Tamayo Valladolid, the most recent rainy season had been particularly cruel, and floods and landslides had negatively impacted agricultural activities. The ejidatarios of La Estanzuela, Emiliano Zapata, and Rancho Nuevo had lost the majority of their crops; in Valenciano, the crop losses had been total. Tamayo Valladolid described the situation in these communities as desperate and expressed his belief that bracero cards could help those affected remedy their situation.³⁹

³⁵ Lic. Alfonso Chico Patiño, Relación de hombres desocupados en los ranchos y poblados del Municipio, según informes proporcionados por los Delegados Municipales y que obran en esta Presidencia Municipal, August 9, 1951, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Municipios, serie C-1, caja 259, expediente 12, fojas sin número.

³⁶ Relación De Trabajadores Emigrantes Que Se Le Ha Asignado A Los Municipios Que A Continuación Se Enumeran, Undated, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, foja 179. Although undated, this document is included in a file that documents how bracero cards were distributed in Michoacán in 1963.

³⁷ J. Jesús Aguilar Naranjo to Oficial Mayor Gobierno, June 28, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 11, foja 104.

³⁸ Cornelio Maldonado Pulido to Ciudadano Profesor Manuel López Pérez, May 20, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, foja 76.

³⁹ Carlos Tamayo Valladolid to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, August 18, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, fojas 25-26; Carlos Tamayo Valladolid to C. Gobernador del Estado, August 12, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 13, fojas 176-177; Carlos Tamayo Valladolid to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, August 19, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 14, fojas 12-13; Carlos Tamayo Valladolid to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, August 14, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 14, foja 101; David Gutiérrez Ortiz, Lista de Aspirantes a Braceros del Poblado de Valenciano Mpio. de Ixtlán, Mich. Debido a Que se les Perdieron sus Siembras de MAIZ Y FRIJOL En el Mismo Ejido, August 14, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 14, foja 102. Gutiérrez Ortiz was the comisariado ejidal of Valenciano.

Ixtlán's government did receive 100 bracero cards in August 1963, though it appears that these cards were part of a standard allotment, not a response to Tamayo Valladolid's requests.⁴⁰ It is not clear if Tamayo Valladolid actually distributed any cards among the ejidatarios that had experienced crop losses. However, given his request and the severity of the losses, it is possible, even likely, that he did. And although Tamayo Valladolid was lobbying on behalf of ejidatarios, who were officially proscribed from migrating as braceros, state officials' unwillingness to intervene in the bracero recruitment and selection process meant that he likely would not have faced any consequences for giving them bracero cards. Even if state authorities had protested Tamayo Valladolid's proposed actions, the municipal president could shield himself with the state government's own instructions: as noted in Chapter Two, Michoacán's government instructed its municipal counterparts to target those "in most need" during bracero recruitment periods.

"Advocacy"

Requests like those made by J. Jesús Aguilar Naranjo and Carlos Tamayo Valladolid are indicative of a broader trend that occurred during the final years of the Bracero Program: municipal governments increasingly lobbied for bracero cards that would go to groups of rural workers who had pledged to use their earnings to remedy a specific ill, such as landlessness or crop losses, or invest them in material improvements, such as schoolhouses. This trend was most evident in Michoacán. During the Bracero Program's final six years, municipal presidents there sent 54 requests of this kind to the state government. There had only been one request like this during all of the previous years of the program.⁴¹

On the surface, the requests made by municipal presidents seemed altruistic, like the advocacy efforts of Jalisco politician Guadalupe Urzúa Flores, who, according to María Teresa Fernández Aceves, secured funds for material improvement projects, most notably public health facilities, without personally profiting or resorting to violence.⁴² For example, in March 1962, Municipal President Roberto Ángeles of Ecuandureo, Michoacán wrote to Governor David Franco Rodríguez on behalf of the residents of La Soledad. Ángeles told the governor that La Soledad lacked a schoolhouse and that classes were being taught in the main building of the old *hacienda* complex. The residents of La Soledad, together with the municipal government, had made past attempts at building a schoolhouse, but these efforts had been frustrated by crop losses that had created a "truly painful" economic situation in the community. In order to remedy their economic situation and build the long-desired schoolhouse, the residents of La Soledad wanted

⁴⁰ Lic. José L. Flores to C. Presidente Municipal, August 9, 1963, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, foja 122; Lic. José L. Flores to Ciudadano Presidente Municipal, August 23, 1963, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 14, foja 211.

⁴¹ AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 6; caja 3, expedientes 8-10; caja 4, expedientes 11, 13-15; caja 5, expedientes 16-18; caja 6, expedientes 20-22; J. Jesús Ávila García to Ciudadano Gobernador del Estado, August 2, 1945, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 360.

⁴² María Teresa Fernández Aceves, "Advocate or *Cacica*? Guadalupe Urzúa Flores: Modernizer and Peasant Leader in Jalisco," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 236-254.

150 bracero cards; the monies earned in the U.S. would then be invested in a six-classroom schoolhouse.⁴³

But it is possible that Ángeles was making the request because he stood to personally profit from the endeavor, like José Vargas Rivera, his counterpart in Puruándiro, Michoacán, did. Vargas Rivera, with the consent of Puruándiro's ayuntamiento, decided to collect \$1,000 pesos from each rural worker who received a bracero card during the selection drawings (this despite municipal governments being barred from collecting any fees from selected braceros). The collected monies were to be invested in material improvements, including the renovation of the municipal palace and the construction of a new schoolhouse. However, the projects were never completed because, according to four members of the ayuntamiento, Vargas Rivera absconded with the \$300,000 pesos that were collected from the beginning of his term in 1962 until the Bracero Program's end in 1964.⁴⁴ There were also press reports that Vargas Rivera not only kept the money, but that he did not give bracero cards to those rural workers who had paid for them. Rather, he and Municipal Secretary Abdías Liévano Ríos had distributed the cards among relatives and friends in nearby Panindícuaro, Michoacán and Cerano, Guanajuato.⁴⁵ This and other alleged improprieties – the ayuntamiento members also accused Vargas Rivera of ignoring their decision to remove the local police chief from power and of profiting from the operation of brothels – damaged Vargas Rivera's working relationship with other municipal officials and led to his resignation in November 1964.⁴⁶

Some local-level officials responded to this type of corruption by making their own advocacy-style requests. In February 1964, Rafael Méndez Zapién, the school director in La Higuera, Michoacán, in the municipality of Pajacuarán, requested an unspecified number of bracero cards from the state government. The prospective braceros from La Higuera had all pledged to invest their earnings in the local school. However, Méndez Zapién wanted the cards sent directly to La Higuera, not Pajacuarán's municipal government. The school director explained this particular request by citing the municipal government's "bad record" during past bracero contracting periods. Instead of distributing bracero cards in accordance with the officially established procedure, Pajacuarán's government had exploited rural workers by selling them cards. Méndez Zapién believed that sending the bracero cards directly to La Higuera would be the only way to ensure that rural workers from there would be able to migrate and help the school construction project.⁴⁷

Controlling the Bracero Program

There is no record of how Pajacuarán officials reacted to Méndez Zapién's request, or if they were even made aware of it. But if they were aware, it is likely that their reaction would

⁴³ Roberto Ángeles to C. Lic. D. David Franco Rodríguez, March 16, 1962, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, 15.

⁴⁴ José Díaz Delgado, J. Guadalupe Molina Villicaña, Ubaldo Lara López, and Francisco Ceballos Flores to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, October 5, 1964, AGHPEM, serie Puruándiro, caja 3, expediente 1, fojas sin número.

⁴⁵ Leopoldo Gómez M., "\$1,000.00 por "Bracero" en Puruándiro," *El Informador*, September 23, 1964, 3-4. Newspaper in AGHPEM, serie Puruándiro, caja 2, expediente 6.

⁴⁶ José Vargas Rivera to C. Lic. Agustín Arriaga Rivera, November 12, 1964, AGHPEM, serie Pruruándiro, caja 3, expediente 1, foja sin número.

⁴⁷ Rafael Méndez Zapién to Mi Muy Estimado Señor, February 9, 1964, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 20, foja 99.

have been negative. Unlike the federal and state governments, which delegated the task of recruiting and selecting braceros, center-western municipal governments never seriously considered delegating that responsibility to community-level officials. In fact, because of the many benefits the Bracero Program afforded them – personal profits, as well as the ability to reward political allies, remove political opponents, and ameliorate agrarian conflicts and pressures – municipal authorities zealously guarded their right to recruit and select migrant workers and they moved against any non-municipal actors that attempted to intervene in the process. This defense started as soon as the task was delegated to them, and it continued throughout the Bracero Program.

During the summer of 1945 in Tarimoro, Guanajuato, the municipal government there moved against the Alianza de Braceros Nacionales de México en Los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica (the Alliance of Mexican Braceros in the United States of America). The Alianza was organized in October 1943 in the southern California city of Fullerton. It was conceived as a response to apathy among braceros working in the U.S. According to the Alianza's founders, many braceros did not understand their responsibility as representatives of Mexico in the United States and were more interested in returning home instead of working. It was hoped that the Alianza would guide its members and help them better honor Mexico while they were abroad.⁴⁸ The Alianza established offices in Mexico within two years of its founding, and Alianza Secretary General José Hernández Serrano began organizing lists of members that were interested in migrating and forwarding them for consideration to federal and state authorities.⁴⁹ In Guanajuato at least, state officials would forward the Alianza lists to their municipal counterparts so that they would at least be aware that the rural workers included in them were interested in migrating.⁵⁰

The Alianza lists did not garner an enthusiastic response from Tarimoro's municipal president, Ernesto Santa Cruz García. In July 1945, Hernández Serrano complained that Santa Cruz García was refusing to consider the list of local prospective braceros the Alianza had drafted, thus violating an agreement the Alianza had with Governor Ernesto Hidalgo; Hernández Serrano claimed that Santa Cruz García was reticent because the authorization of the Alianza list would deprive him of the opportunity to sell bracero cards to rural workers from other municipalities.⁵¹ Santa Cruz García responded by alleging that it was the Alianza that was defying Governor Hidalgo's wishes, since the list they had compiled included ejidatarios and residents of other municipalities. Not only that, but the Alianza was collecting fees from those it included in its lists, indicating that the organization may not have been as disinterested as it claimed to be, whereas Santa Cruz García never collected money for local rural workers that wanted to be included in the bracero card drawing.⁵² Hernández Serrano answered Santa Cruz

⁴⁸ Acta Constitutiva de la "Alianza de Braceros Nacionales de México, en Los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica," October 2, 1943; José Hernández S. to Sr. Presidente de la República, October 18, 1943; AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 446, expediente 437.1/340, fojas sin número.

⁴⁹ José Hernández Serrano to C. Gobernador, June 14, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (2), año 1945, expediente 3, foja sin número.

⁵⁰ Lic. Juan Ignacio Ibáñez to C. Presidente Municipal, June 18, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (37), año 1945, expediente 1, foja sin número.

⁵¹ José Hernández Serrano to Secretario General del Comité Regional Pro-Braceros del Pueblo de Tarimoro, Gto., July 21, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (37), año 1945, expediente 1, foja sin número.

⁵² Ernesto Santa Cruz García to Ciudadano Secretario General de la Alianza de Braceros Nacionales de México en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, July 24, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (37), año 1945, expediente 1, foja sin número.

García by stating that any fees the Alianza charged were for the sole purpose of maintaining their offices, and nothing more.⁵³

After this exchange, Santa Cruz García incarcerated Ricardo Aguado Rodríguez, the Alianza's representative in Tarimoro. Despite Santa Cruz García's repeated warnings that the Alianza was not authorized to distribute bracero cards, the municipal president noted that constituents of his, as well as rural workers from the neighboring municipalities of Acámbaro, Jerécuaro, and Salvatierra, were still approaching Aguado Rodríguez with the idea that being included in the Alianza lists would guarantee them a bracero card. When the municipal president realized that Aguado Rodríguez was still collecting fees from prospective braceros, he ordered the latter's arrest and fined him \$25 pesos as a condition of his release. But Aguado Rodríguez resumed his activities once he was free, leading Santa Cruz García to once again order his arrest. When Santa Cruz García discussed the matter with Governor Hidalgo, the governor stated that he did not recognize the Alianza or sanction its activities (though this disavowal did not stop Secretary General Hernández Serrano from complaining to Governor Hidalgo about Santa Cruz García's actions).⁵⁴

Three years later in Jalisco, municipal governments began squeezing the sugar workers' unions out of the bracero recruitment and selection process. As shown in Chapter Two, union leaders in Jalisco's sugar-growing communities received direct allotments of bracero cards to distribute among organized workers in 1946 and 1947; when that preferential treatment ended in 1948, there were calls for organized sugar workers to be included in the lists of prospective braceros compiled by municipal governments. In response to these calls, Tecalitlán Municipal President Ezequiel Guardado stated in May 1948 that he would enroll any rural workers interested in migrating in his jurisdiction's list of prospective braceros, regardless of union affiliation. Implied in Guardado's declaration was that sugar workers would have to go directly to him, and not the union leaders who had distributed cards the previous two years.⁵⁵

But Jalisco's municipal presidents proved reluctant to distribute cards among rural workers whose primary loyalty may have been to their union leaders or political officials that lobbied on their behalf. In October 1948, federal legislator Vidal Díaz Muñoz – who had already been informed by federal official Horacio Terán that Jalisco Governor Jesús González Gallo had entrusted the state's municipal presidents with the task of selecting braceros – requested contracts for 1,500 workers.⁵⁶ Díaz Muñoz repeated his request in February 1949.⁵⁷ And in May 1952, José Campos, the secretary general of the union section that represented workers in Zapotiltic's El Rincón Mill, asked Governor González Gallo for bracero cards that would be distributed among the mill's seasonally unemployed workers.⁵⁸ What these requests indicate is

⁵³ José Hernández Serrano to C. Presidente Municipal de Tarimoro, July 28, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (37), año 1945, expediente 1, foja sin número.

⁵⁴ Ernesto Santa Cruz García to Ciudadano Srio. Gral. de Alianza de Braceros Nacionales de México en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, August 15, 1945; José Hernández Serrano to C. Gobernador de Guanajuato, August 17, 1945; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (37), año 1945, expediente 2, fojas sin número.

⁵⁵ Ezequiel Guardado to C. Srio. General de Gobierno, May 27, 1948, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1948, caja 14, foja sin número.

⁵⁶ Dip. Vidal Díaz Muñoz and Jacinto López to Sr. Lic. Miguel Alemán, October 9, 1948, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 593, expediente 546.6/1-13-A, fojas sin número.

⁵⁷ Summary of a February 22, 1949 letter from Dip. Vidal Díaz Muñoz to C. Presidente, February 23, 1949, AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 593, expediente 546.6/1-13-A, foja sin número.

⁵⁸ José Campos L. to C. Lic. D/ J. Jesús González Gallo, May 6, 1952, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1952, caja 17, foja sin número.

that Jalisco's municipal authorities were no longer willing to select organized sugar workers as braceros, especially if their selection undermined municipal control of the selection process or resulted in political benefits for others.

Municipal presidents also rebuffed any intent by state-level officials to take a more active role in the Bracero Program. In May 1964, Michoacán's government sent two officials – Manuel Cárdenas Mejorada, a tax collector, and Sergio Maldonado Corral, an official with an unspecified state agency – to Huiramba to monitor the drawing of bracero cards there. When Cárdenas Mejorada and Maldonado Corral arrived, they discovered that the list of prospective braceros had not been compiled. The state officials then helped the municipal treasurer announce the drawing via a loudspeaker. A list of 155 prospective braceros was compiled, and 40 were selected during the drawing.⁵⁹

However, while the selected braceros were having their cards certified in the municipal palace, Huiramba's municipal president arrived in an apparent state of inebriation and threatened to declare the drawing null and void. The municipal secretary managed to calm the president by assuring him that only local officials had been involved in the drawing proper. But the president became enraged when he learned that Cárdenas Mejorada had helped expedite the process; he then openly declared that the tax collector had no business meddling in the municipal government's affairs or the selection of braceros. Cárdenas Mejorada left the municipal palace to avoid escalating the conflict. The following day, a sober and contrite municipal president apologized for his behavior and promised to certify the list of selected braceros. But Cárdenas Mejorada then discovered that the municipal president had drawn up cards for rural workers had not been selected, indicating that those cards had either been sold or promised to someone close to the president. These cards were sorted and drawn again, but it is possible that Huiramba's government altered the cards once Cárdenas Mejorada left.⁶⁰

Unlike Huiramba officials, authorities in Lagunillas, Michoacán openly courted the intervention of the state government. However, they did so in hopes that state officials would move against a coyote who was transporting local rural workers to the United States. In an October 1963 letter to the state government, Lagunillas Municipal President Abundio Medina Piñón acknowledged that there had been a "revolt" in the municipality due to how he had distributed an allotment of 25 bracero cards. But Medina Piñón claimed that he had distributed the 25 cards legally, and that the complaints against him were the work of local "agitators" who had dedicated themselves to creating problems and attempting to overthrow his administration. The leader of this group, according to Medina Piñón, was Gregorio Meza, a coyote who had recently sent 20 local rural workers to the United States; each migrant had paid Meza \$1,300 pesos. Medina Piñón wanted state officials to intervene and put a definite end to those activities that were harming his jurisdiction. The implication was clear: Medina Piñón may have reached out to the state government for assistance, but only to ensure that any braceros that left Lagunillas departed on his terms.⁶¹

Conclusion

⁵⁹ Manuel Cárdenas Mejorada to Ciudadano Secretario General de Gobierno, May 8, 1964, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 5, expediente 18, fojas 124-126.

⁶⁰ Manuel Cárdenas Mejorada to Ciudadano Secretario General de Gobierno, May 8, 1964, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 5, expediente 18, fojas 124-126.

⁶¹ Abundio Medina Piñón to C. Profr. Manuel Chávez Campos, October 16, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 10, foja 169.

I have shown in this chapter how individual municipal officials in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán profited directly from the sale of bracero cards. And because they became the ultimate power brokers in the bracero recruitment and selection process, municipal authorities could tailor the Bracero Program for a variety of ends, from rewarding local allies, to removing political threats, to ameliorating rural conflicts and easing agrarian pressures. Although the local-level corruption associated with the Bracero Program sparked new political conflicts, the benefits were so great that municipal officials resented any outside intervention in the contracting process.

This chapter also demonstrates how municipal-level attitudes toward the Bracero Program contrasted starkly with federal- and state-level ones. The federal and state governments distanced themselves from the bracero recruitment and selection process either because they failed to centralize it or because they never seriously considered centralization. But because of the benefits the Bracero Program afforded them, municipal officials zealously guarded their right to select migrant workers, even though they presumably could have delegated the task to community-level officials, such as municipal delegates or ejido presidents. Municipal authorities also never openly expressed worries about undocumented migration or labor shortages, the way their federal and state counterparts did, although they did have to deflect (admittedly justified) accusations that their administration of the Bracero Program was corrupted.

The power wielded by municipal governments during the Bracero Program shows that local-level officials in mid-twentieth-century Mexico could have power independent of the federal and state governments. As noted above, municipal authorities used the Bracero Program to solidify their local power, not to appease or ingratiate themselves to federal or state authorities. At the same time, the conflicts sparked by the Bracero Program show that the lowest levels of the postrevolutionary state were not free from political instability and conflicts. Put another way, while a certain type of stability, exemplified most conspicuously by the PRI's hold on the presidency, became the norm at the federal- and state-level during the mid-twentieth century, municipal politics remained fraught and contested.

This chapter and the two that preceded it had a “top-down” view of the Bracero Program. That is, they focused on how Mexico's federal government, and the state and municipal governments of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán, administered the program. The dissertation will now switch focus to the braceros themselves, the reasons they wanted to migrate to the United States, and how they responded to federal, state, and municipal Bracero Program-related policies. Chapters Four and Five focus on braceros from the Lerma-Chapala Basin, the area of the center-west where demand for bracero cards was highest. In Chapter Six, I examine the Sierra Purépecha, the region of Michoacán that was affected by the Parícutin volcanic eruption; rural workers from this region were granted an exemption that gave them preference during contracting periods in the 1940s, but demand for bracero cards waned in the 1950s and 1960s.

Chapter Four

Abandoning a Dearly Beloved Land: Conservative Opposition to Revolutionary Policies and Bracero Emigration from the Lerma-Chapala Basin

In the summer of 1948, the ejidatarios of Presa del Aguacate, a community in the Guanajuato municipality of Pénjamo, invaded 27 hectares owned by Cleofas Cervantes Hernández and Alberto Rodríguez, two private smallholders. The smallholders, who described themselves as “poor rural workers who live solely off the products of our lands,” were incensed and hoped that federal authorities would move against the ejidatarios, especially since the financial losses caused by the invasion were forcing them to consider a drastic action. Without official intervention, Cervantes Hernández and Rodríguez feared that the harassment by land-hungry ejidatarios would force them to “abandon their dearly beloved land and leave the country as braceros.”¹

The conflicts pushing Cervantes Hernández and Rodríguez to consider migrating had started when private owners mobilized against the government-sponsored agrarian reform. Like their counterparts throughout the center-west, conservative landowners in Presa del Aguacate viewed the expropriation and redistribution of their properties as illegal and immoral. When rural workers in the community formally requested lands in early 1931, numerous owners squared off against them, claiming that they had sold off enough of their estates that they now measured less than 150 hectares, which would have exempted them from expropriation and redistribution.² Federal officials dismissed these challenges and sanctioned the establishment of an ejido in the spring of 1936. But almost immediately there were allegations that the ejidatarios were claiming lands they had not been granted and even forcibly taking over privately owned orchards.³ By 1944, the ejidatarios acknowledged that they were interested in expanding their ejido, but they also claimed that the past allegations against them were part of a scheme to deny them the 1936 land grant. This declaration implied that any actions the ejidatarios took against private owners, including Cleofas Cervantes Hernández and Alberto Rodríguez, were a justified defense of their interests.⁴

Cervantes Hernández’s and Rodríguez’s situation reveals the political and cultural factors that shaped the socioeconomic conditions of prospective braceros from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. The two smallholders had a powerful socioeconomic reason to want to migrate: agricultural production on their small estate had declined. However, this declining output was not the result of natural factors, such as a drought or the Parícutin volcanic eruption that affected Michoacán rural workers during this same period. Cervantes Hernández and Rodríguez were

¹ Cleofas Cervantes Hernández and Alberto Rodríguez to C. Jefe del Departamento Agrario, July 15, 1948, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.54 (25), año 1948, expediente 7, foja sin número.

² P. Elías Calles, Ley de Dotaciones y Restituciones de Tierras y Aguas, Reglamentaria del Artículo 27 de la Constitución, April 23, 1927, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XLI, Número 43, Sección Primera, April 27, 1927, 1, 3-13; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado Presa del Aguacate, Estado de Guanajuato, April 22, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVI, Número 28, June 13, 1936, 4-6.

³ Summary of a June 20, 1936 letter from Eusebio Vergara to C. Presidente, June 23, 1936, AGN, fondo Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, caja 281, expediente 404.1/5740, foja 5; Cayetano Quiles to Señor don Enrique Fernández Martínez, October 22, 1936, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.54 (24), año 1936, foja sin número.

⁴ Summary of an April 13, 1944 letter from Comisariado Ejidal, Presa del Aguacate to C. Presidente, April 18, 1944, AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 358, expediente 404.11/1249, foja sin número.

suffering losses because they were embroiled in a community-level conflict between conservative opponents of revolutionary policies, most notably the agrarian reform, and those that embraced the government's initiatives. This conservative opposition was rooted in a Catholic doctrine that, among other things, stressed the sanctity of private property. Thus, many faithful Catholics in the center-west interpreted the agrarian reform – which called for the government to assume ownership of private estates and then grant rural workers use rights to individual parcels – as part of a broader assault on their religious values.⁵

This chapter examines prospective braceros from the Lerma-Chapala Basin, the region that experienced the highest demand for bracero cards. These prospective braceros' motivations for migrating were related, if indirectly, to previous Catholic-inspired opposition to the revolutionary state. Much of the literature that examines Mexico-U.S. migration, both during the Bracero Program and after, focuses on broad and somewhat crude socioeconomic motives for migrating.⁶ I do not discount socioeconomic factors; in fact, they were probably the proximate cause of most decisions to migrate. But my close examination of written requests for bracero cards shows that political and cultural factors – specifically local allegiance to the Catholic Church and a rejection of revolutionary policies – had a strong effect on the material standing of Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers. Non-economic factors, then, could become economic factors, pushing center-western rural workers to want to migrate to the United States.

Assessing the role that religious opposition to the actions of the anticlerical state played in migration patterns is tricky. Although I will show that some prospective braceros were motivated to migrate by religiously-inspired conflicts, they were not explicitly religious migrants like those studied by Julia Young in her recent work. Young showed that many of those who left Mexico for the United States in the late 1920s were faithful Catholics who were either escaping the violence of the Cristero Rebellion or had been forcibly exiled by the government.⁷ But no prospective braceros ever expressed an explicitly religious motivation for wanting to leave Mexico, and official antagonism towards Catholics subsided after 1940 (though, as noted in Chapter Three, Irapuato's municipal government removed rural workers aligned with the Catholic nationalist Sinarquista organization from its jurisdiction in the early 1950s by recruiting them as braceros).

However, while there may not have been “pure” religious migrants during the years of the Bracero Program, Catholic opposition to the state affected migration in two ways. First,

⁵ For how the Mexican government decided to adopt the system of state ownership and individual use rights, see Emilio Kourí, “La invención del ejido,” *Nexos*, January 2015, 54-61.

⁶ For the Bracero Program, see Cohen, *Braceros*; John Gledhill, *Casi Nada: A Study of Agrarian Reform in the Homeland of Cardenismo* (Albany, N.Y.: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, University at Albany, State University of New York; Austin, Tex.: Distributed by University of Texas Press, 1991); and Snodgrass, “The Bracero Program, 1942-1964,” 79-102. Gledhill's primary focus is the ejido created from the expropriated *hacienda* of Guaracha, Michoacán, but he does note that many ejidatarios sought to migrate after the early failures of the collective ejido. For post-Bracero Program migration, see Arroyo Alejandre, de León Arias, and Valenzuela, *Migración rural hacia Estados Unidos*; Cámara and Van Kemper, ed., *Migration Across Frontiers*; Cebada, “La migración hacia Estados Unidos y dos comunidades de origen en el estado de Guanajuato”; Dinerman, *Migrants and Stay-at Homes*; Durand, “Guanajuato, cantera de migrantes”; Jones, ed., *Patterns of Undocumented Migration*; López Castro, *La casa dividida*; Massey et al., *Return to Aztlan*; Massey and Durand, ed., *Crossing the Border*; Massey, Durand, and Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*; Reichert, “A Town Divided”; and Roberts, “Agrarian Structures and Labor Mobility in Rural Mexico.”

⁷ Young, *Mexican Exodus*. In his 1933 examination of emigration from Arandas, Jalisco, Paul Taylor also noted that many of those who left for the United States did so to escape the violence of the Cristero Rebellion, though he did not use the term religious migrants. For this, see Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community*.

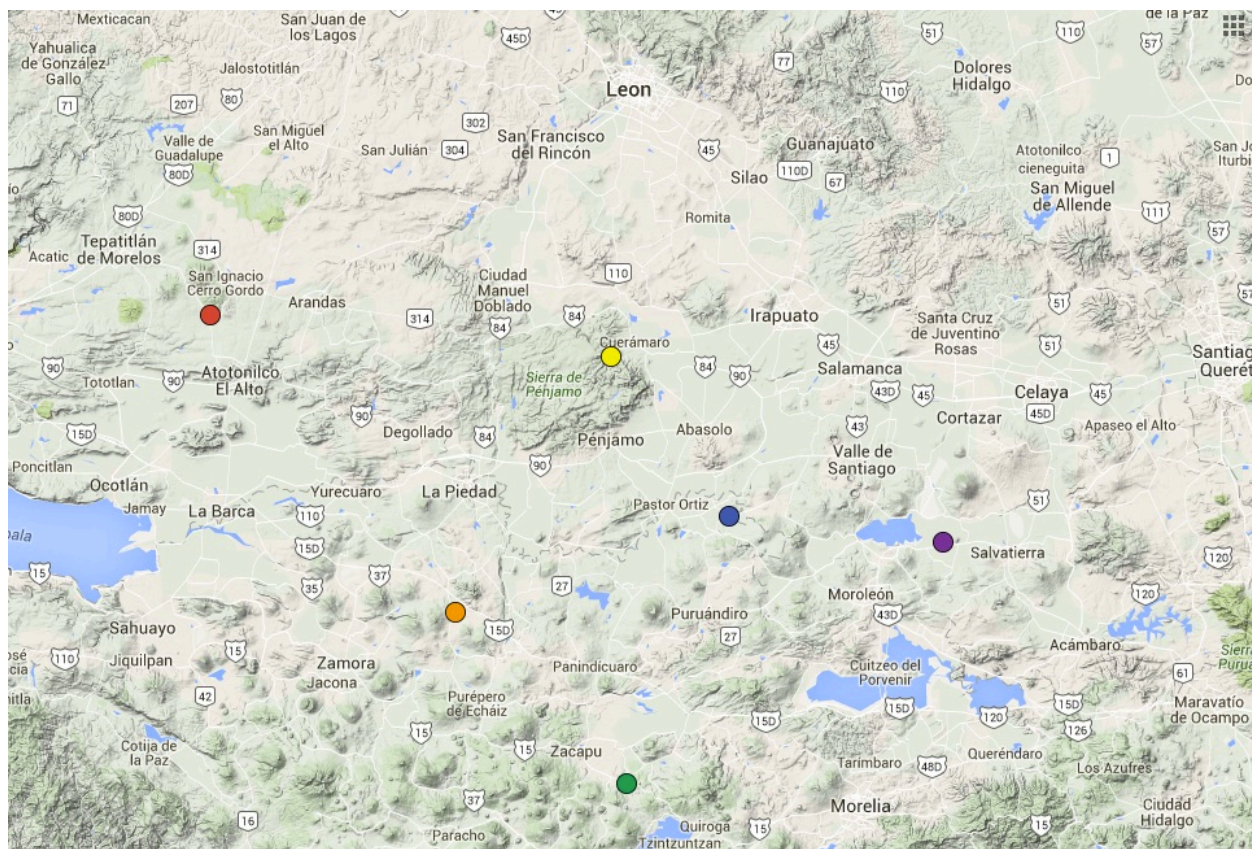
religious discontent during the 1920s and 1930s produced a significant number of landless non-ejidatarios, the very type of rural workers eligible to receive bracero cards. Some Catholic rural workers refused to accept ejido lands on principle, while some conservative landholders with deep ties to the Catholic Church successfully blocked the creation of ejidos. Others who did become ejidatarios, as well as conservative smallholders who opposed the agrarian reform, were forced off their lands by the conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s that persisted into the years of the Bracero Program.

Second, migration network theory – which posits that first-time migrants establish social and financial networks that later attract more migrants – would lead us to expect that the migratory flows of the late 1920s could influence the demand for bracero cards in the center-west.⁸ Most Mexicans who left for the United States during the conflict were from Guanajuato, Jalisco, or Michoacán, the states where the Cristero Rebellion was strongest, and Young shows that many of them maintained active ties to Mexico while they were abroad.⁹ Hypothetically, these earlier religious migrants drew more migrants over time, especially when an official means of leaving the country became available during the Bracero Program. The fact that center-western rural workers from the areas where the religious conflicts were strongest proved particularly eager to leave as braceros suggests that social networks established during the Cristero Rebellion may have played a role in their decisions to migrate.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of nineteenth-century Catholic opposition to the state and of the Cristeros, the Sinarquistas, and the Partido Acción Nacional, three Catholic-aligned movements that opposed the revolutionary state. It then shifts to an analysis of a series of intra-community conflicts that prompted rural workers from the Michoacán municipalities of Puruándiro, Coeneo, and Churintzio to ask for bracero cards. I will then examine the Jalisco municipality of Tepatitlán, where conservative opposition to the agrarian reform created a landless and dependent workforce that then sought to migrate. The chapter concludes with an examination of Cupareo, a community in the Guanajuato municipality of Salvatierra where past Catholic opposition to the revolutionary state's education initiatives influenced prospective braceros' desire to migrate. Throughout the chapter, I use the term "conservatives" to describe those who opposed the revolutionary state as Cristeros, Sinarquistas, or Panistas, or whose disagreements with revolutionary policies was rooted in Catholic beliefs.

⁸ Massey et al., "Theories of International Migration," 448-450. As first noted in the Introduction, once first-wave migrants establish themselves in a receiving community, the social and economic risks of later migrants are reduced because a receiving infrastructure is already in place. As more migrants arrive in the receiving society, migrant social networks expand, and that in turn attracts more migrants.

⁹ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 85; Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States*, 13. According to Meyer, half of the 50,000 Cristeros who were active in May 1929 were from Guanajuato (3,000), Jalisco (10,000), and Michoacán (12,000). Gamio analyzed remittance patterns to determine that most Mexican migrants in the late 1920s and early 1930s were from the center-west. The states that received the most remittances were Guanajuato (19.6 percent of the total), Jalisco (14.7 percent), and Michoacán (20 percent). Gamio did not make an explicit connection between migration and the Cristero Rebellion.



Map 4.1: Communities analyzed in this chapter. Red: San José de Gracia, Jalisco; Orange: Changuitiro, Michoacán; Yellow: Presa del Aguacate, Guanajuato; Green: Comanja, Michoacán; Blue: San José Huipana, Michoacán; Cupareo, Guanajuato. Source: Google My Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1bcTsIeAq6Iavfpt_9E2-C7GTyWY&usp=sharing.

Catholic Nationalism and Opposition: The Cristeros, the Sinarquistas, and the PAN

The Lerma-Chapala Basin – particularly the Bajío, the broad, temperate valleys of southwestern Guanajuato, north-central Michoacán, and northeastern Jalisco – has long been considered a particularly Catholic region of Mexico, owing to the fact that it was largely settled by Spanish emigrants and Hispanized indigenous converts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁰ During the half-century prior to the 1910 revolution, the Catholic Church deepened its influence in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, while its followers in the region resisted any attempts by the state to curb the Church’s power. Beginning in the 1840s, there was an upsurge in lay association activities in the Bajío, most notably the Vela Perpetua, a woman-led association dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament.¹¹ In the early 1870s, center-western Catholics rebelled when the Liberal state attempted to fully separate Church and state power. When Porfirio Díaz launched his own rebellion in 1876, he successfully courted these *religioneros*, although he ultimately turned on them once he secured the presidency.¹²

¹⁰ For the settling of the Bajío, see John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Margaret Chowning, “The Catholic Church and the Ladies of the Vela Perpetua: Gender and Devotional Change in Nineteenth-Century Mexico,” *Past and Present* 221 (2013): 197-237.

¹² Brian A. Stauffer, “Victory on Earth or in Heaven: Religion, Reform, and Rebellion in Michoacán, Mexico, 1863-1877” (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2015). Stauffer notes that the proximate cause of the

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, clerical leaders in the Lerma-Chapala Basin worked to secure the Church's standing. New bishoprics had been created in 1864 in Zamora, Michoacán and León, Guanajuato, and the zeal of the bishops in the new dioceses was notorious, both reflecting and reinforcing the unusually strong pattern of lay devotion to and support of the Church in the region. Jesús Tapia Santamaría calls the vigorous actions of the Zamora hierarchy a strategy of "integration and intransigence." Catholic leaders there formed ties with landowning elites by educating their children and recruiting younger sons to join the clergy, while they cultivated popular support by continuing to sponsor religious celebrations and increasingly lobbying on behalf of Catholic workers; at the same time, they would preach to their flocks about the evils of liberalism, anarchism, and socialism.¹³ And because of the growing influence of Social Catholicism, these clerical leaders also promoted the idea that Mexico had to become a harmonious nation where private property was respected and different socioeconomic classes cooperated with each other to address the ills of capitalist production.¹⁴

The links between Catholic leaders, landowners, and rural workers in the Lerma-Chapala Basin deeply influenced the political and social views of the latter two groups. As noted by Andrés Antonio Fábregas Puig in his examination of Los Altos (the term commonly used to refer to the Jalisco municipalities of the Bajío), the owners of large *haciendas* and smaller *ranchos* there genuinely believed that their socioeconomic position was divinely ordained.¹⁵ Put another way, landowners in Jalisco interpreted the prerevolutionary system of private property, and any social differences that system created, as part of a sacred plan. Any attempt to undo that system was seen as a blasphemous attack on the sanctity of the status quo. Both Luis González y

religionero revolt was the government requiring public employees to swear fealty to the 1857 Constitution, which included a number of anticlerical provisions. More broadly, center-western Catholics were incensed at Liberal laws aimed at fully separating church and state authority. Specifically, they objected to the establishment of civil marriages, restrictions on public worship, the expropriation of Church-owned lands, and the adoption of freedom of religion, which allowed Protestant missionaries from the United States to enter Mexico.

¹³ Jesús Tapia Santamaría, *Campo religioso y evolución política en el Bajío zamorano* (Zamora, Mich.: El Colegio de Michoacán; Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1986), 129-178.

¹⁴ Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 158-161. Social Catholicism emerged after Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*. The encyclical acknowledged the ills of capitalist economies, but it rejected the Marxist idea that class conflict was necessary to remedy these ills. Rather, the encyclical posited that private property and socioeconomic differences were part of the divine plan, and that both employers and employees had a responsibility to cooperate with each other to achieve a more just society.

¹⁵ Large haciendas were common in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, but since at the least the eighteenth century the region had also been home to numerous smaller holdings, ranchos, that measured less than 500 hectares. I will discuss these numbers in more detail in Chapters Five and Six, but according to the 1930 Agrarian Census, there were at least 54,901 private holdings that measured less than 500 hectares in the Lerma-Chapala Basin (these figures include private holdings that were rented to tenant farmers or sharecroppers). Per that same census, there were at least 1,269 holdings that measured more than 500 hectares. For the number of private estates in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, see México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Guanajuato* (México: D.A.A.P., 1937), 18-21; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Jalisco* (México: D.A.A.P., 1938), 20-25; and México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Michoacán* (México: D.A.A.P., 1937), 20-23. For the development of haciendas and ranchos during the colonial and early national periods, see D.A. Brading, *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío: León, 1700-1860* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978); and Tutino, *Making a New World*. For the attitudes of private owners in Los Altos during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Andrés Antonio Fábregas Puig, *La formación histórica de una región: Los Altos de Jalisco* (México, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1986), 182-194.

González and Jennie Purnell agree that this attitude was shared by the *rancheros* of northwestern Michoacán.¹⁶ And Jean Meyer notes that center-western landowners and rural workers were willing to recognize government authority, so long as the government did not “make war on God” or force Mexicans to betray their “moral conscience.”¹⁷ This deeply felt religiosity would go on to influence how Lerma-Chapala Basin landowners and rural workers reacted to the revolutionary state and its policies. Thus, I would argue that their actions, even outside the realm of the religious, must be interpreted through the prism of their Catholic identity.

With the exception of the decisive battles between Álvaro Obregón and Pancho Villa in the Bajío in 1915 and a rash of banditry in the late 1910s, the 1910 revolution had a minimal impact on the center-west and the Lerma-Chapala Basin.¹⁸ However, tensions escalated during the early 1920s when center-western governors started promoting the redistribution of lands and organized militias of agraristas, landless rural workers who supported the agrarian reform. Catholic landowners and rural workers reacted with hostility to these initial attempts to expropriate private property.¹⁹ When President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) attempted to enforce the anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution, many center-western Catholics rushed to the Church’s defense, much as they had done during the 1870s. After religious services were suspended in the summer of 1926 to protest President Calles’s decree that all priests register with the government, armed rebels that came to be known as Cristeros rose up against the government.²⁰ The opposition to revolutionary anticlericalism was strongest in the Lerma-Chapala Basin; the rebellion’s earliest clashes were in Pénjamo, Guanajuato, San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, and Ciudad Hidalgo, Michoacán, all in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, and the region was the conflict’s most enduring focal point.²¹

¹⁶ Luis González y González, *Pueblo en vilo: Microhistoria de San José de Gracia* (México: El Colegio de México, 1968); and Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 163-178. González y González and Purnell examined San José de Gracia, a rancho community near the small Michoacán cities of Jiquilpan and Sahuayo. During the 1860s and 1870s, tenant farmers there purchased small fractions of the Cojumatlán hacienda, which was broken up because its owners experienced financial difficulties. Because the nearest formal population centers were in neighboring Jalisco, the *rancheros* approached the bishop of Zamora in the late 1880s and asked for the establishment of a parish church that would become the center of a new community; the bishop approved this request. As a result, San José de Gracia’s history and the social and cultural attitudes of its residents were intimately linked to the parish church and priest.

¹⁷ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 184-185.

¹⁸ Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 65-69; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 2: Counter-revolution and Reconstruction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 321-328, 395-403. The most prominent center-western bandit was Inés Chávez García, a native of Puruándiro, Michoacán.

¹⁹ Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 80-113. Boyer notes that some of these early agrarian militias disregarded official orders and used the weapons that the state government gave them to settle local political scores.

²⁰ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 43-49. Calles also attempted to limit the number of active priests in Mexico, supported the efforts of governors, like Tabasco’s Tomás Garrido Canabal, who openly attacked the Church, and backed efforts to establish a schismatic Mexican Church. For an overview of revolutionary anticlericalism, see Bantjes, “Mexican Revolutionary Anticlericalism”; and Fallaw, “Varieties of Mexican Revolutionary Anticlericalism.” For anticlericalism in Jalisco, see Robert Curley, “Anticlericalism and Public Space in Revolutionary Jalisco,” *The Americas* 65:4 (2009): 511-533.

²¹ Olivera Sedano, *Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929*, 152-153, 158, 167-168. See also Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico’s Cristero Rebellion: Michoacán, 1927-29* (Oxford; New York: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2004); Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*; and Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*.

In addition to being unhappy with President Calles's anticlericalism, the Cristeros, the majority of whom were rural workers, vehemently opposed the agrarian reform.²² The agrarian facet of the conflict was exacerbated after the federal government enlisted the *agrarista* militias that had first been organized during the early 1920s as auxiliaries. Since their initial organization, many *agraristas* had come to genuinely believe that class conflict was necessary to remake Mexican society, and they believed that it was appropriate and necessary for the government to intervene directly in the agrarian economy. Thus, the *agraristas* viewed opponents of the agrarian reform as enemies of their own particular socioeconomic interests.²³ The *agraristas* and Cristeros increasingly thought of each other as bitter enemies, and their clashes internally divided communities and sparked conflicts between communities.²⁴

A June 1929 ceasefire agreement formally ended the Cristero Rebellion and prompted the resumption of religious services, but the end result of three years of fighting was essentially a stalemate. Mexico's bishops dropped their opposition to the clerical registry, whose creation had been the proximate cause of the conflict. However, federal officials agreed to abstain from interfering with the Church's "spiritual functions."²⁵ In the agrarian realm, landownership remained a privilege that was reserved for a small minority of the population. Per the 1930 Agrarian Census, only 3.46 percent of the center-west's adult population owned agricultural holdings; in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, the percentage was 3.47.²⁶

Despite the ceasefire, there were renewed outbreaks of Cristero guerrilla activity in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán during the early and mid 1930s, though this did not lead to

²² Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 85-87.

²³ For the development of *agrarismo* in Michoacán and the growing divide between proponents of the agrarian reform and Catholics, see Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*. For the development of *agrarismo* in Jalisco, see Ann L. Craig, *The First Agraristas: An Oral History of a Mexican Agrarian Reform Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For *agrarismo* in Guanajuato, see Francisco Javier Meyer Cosío, *Tradición y progreso: La reforma agraria en Acámbaro, Guanajuato (1915-1941)* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Secretaría de Gobernación, 1993).

²⁴ For the intra- and inter-community clashes between *agraristas* and Cristeros, see Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*.

²⁵ Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 185; Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 58-66, 201-203. Although federal authorities reconciled with Mexico's bishops and stopped openly antagonizing faithful Catholics, Meyer notes that the government did move against many Cristero military leaders. Five hundred Cristero officers were killed between 1929 and 1935. Additionally, some state governors, most notably in Tabasco and Veracruz, continued openly harassing Catholics.

²⁶ Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Guanajuato*, 12-14; Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Jalisco*, 12-16; Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Michoacán*, 12-14; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Quinto Censo de Población, 15 de Mayo de 1930: Estado de Guanajuato* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1935), 11-12, 88-96; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Quinto Censo de Población, 15 de Mayo de 1930: Estado de Jalisco* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1936), 11-12, 169-198; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Quinto Censo de Población, 15 de Mayo de 1930: Estado de Michoacán* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1935), 11-12, 129-153. According to the Population Census, the center-west's population aged 15 and older was 2,006,683; in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, it was 1,093,256. The age of majority in Mexico was 16 during this period, but the Census only lists how many were aged 15 or older. According to the Agrarian Census, there were 69,431 private landowners in the center-west; in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, there were 37,950 private landowners. These figures only include landowners who lived on and directly administered their holdings. There were 29,974 private agricultural properties in the center-west that were managed by administrators, and 3,499 properties that were rented out or worked by sharecroppers. In the Lerma-Chapala Basin, there were 16,548 private properties that were managed by administrators, and 1,674 properties that were rented out or worked by sharecroppers.

another widespread rebellion.²⁷ Catholic discontent was further inflamed after Lázaro Cárdenas was elected president in 1934. Cárdenas, who governed Michoacán during the latter stages of the Cristero Rebellion, was an anticlerical and an ardent advocate of the agrarian reform. His administration expropriated and redistributed 1.19 million hectares – 43.76 percent of all the lands redistributed in the center-west during Cárdenas’s presidency – in 1,702 newly created or expanded Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidos.²⁸ By the time Cárdenas left office in 1940, 12 percent of the Lerma-Chapala Basin’s adult population had gained access to lands via the agrarian reform.²⁹

The Cristeros’ efforts to reignite a widespread rebellion failed, but in 1937 they gained a new means of opposing the revolutionary state when the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS) was established in León, Guanajuato. The Sinarquistas were Catholic nationalists whose goal was to roll back Cárdenas’s policies. UNS members interpreted Cárdenas’s governing agenda as part of a plot to establish a secular, Soviet-style state, and they hoped that their resistance would restore and then preserve Mexico’s Catholic identity. The UNS grew rapidly, especially in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Sixty-eight percent of the approximately 210,000 Sinarquistas who were active in 1940 were from that region. The vast majority of Sinarquistas, an estimated 60 to 70 percent, were rural workers. As happened during the Cristero Rebellion, these conservative rural workers engaged their agrarista counterparts in bloody clashes; over 100 Sinarquistas were killed during confrontations with agraristas between 1939 and 1941.³⁰

As noted in Chapter Two, the Sinarquistas abstained from establishing a formal political party until the late 1940s, though UNS members did compete in elections as members of or in alliance with other conservative parties. One of these parties was the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), which was established in Morelia, Michoacán in 1939. Like the Sinarquistas, Panistas were Catholic nationalists who opposed the revolutionary state. But the PAN differed from the UNS in two important ways: one, they were committed to electoral participation; and two, their membership was largely drawn from the university-educated urban middle class. Thus, while the party had a visible presence in center-western urban centers, its inroads among the region’s rural population were limited compared to the UNS’s.³¹

²⁷ For the Segunda Cristiada, as the guerrilla clashes of the 1930s are commonly referred to, see Ben Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico*; Enrique Guerra Manzo, “El fuego sagrado: La segunda Cristiada y el caso de Michoacán (1931-1938),” *Historia Mexicana* 55:2 (2005): 513-575; and Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu: El movimiento Sinarquista en el Bajío, Tomo I*, 91-101.

²⁸ *Estadísticas históricas de México, Tomo I*, 325, 327; Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. In the Lerma-Chapala Basin, Cárdenas’s government redistributed 1,000,334 hectares to 91,872 ejidatarios in 1,335 newly created ejidos. The Cárdenas administration redistributed an additional 195,039 hectares in 367 expanded ejidos; the expansions benefitted 18,468 ejidatarios. In the entire center-west, Cárdenas’s government expropriated and redistributed 2,731,456 hectares to 197,141 ejidatarios.

²⁹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Guanajuato*, 16, 52, 88; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Jalisco*, 16, 50, 80, 109, 136, 164; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán*, 16, 49, 76, 105, 133, 161; Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. According to the 1940 Population Census, there were 1,583,592 legal adults in the Lerma-Chapala Basin (the region’s total population was 2,424,460). In addition to the 110,340 ejidatarios who were granted access to ejido lands during Cárdenas’s presidency, 79,634 Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidatarios had received lands between 1915, when federal law first sanctioned the redistribution of lands, and the beginning of Cárdenas’s presidency.

³⁰ Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu, Tomo I*, 13-17, 160, 180-182, 234, 236, and 322. In 1940, there were 65,000 active Sinarquistas in the Guanajuato Lerma-Chapala Basin, 60,000 in Michoacán, and 15,000-20,000 in Jalisco.

³¹ Loeza, *El Partido Acción Nacional*. The PAN’s presence in urban centers was not accidental. As noted by Loeza, the party’s founder, Manuel Gómez Morín, actively recruited university-educated conservatives to join the

Intra-Community Conflicts and the Bracero Program

The conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s endured into the years of the Bracero Program. In the Michoacán municipality of Puruándiro, these continuing conflicts put supporters of the agrarian reform on the defensive and prompted them to consider migrating as braceros. In March 1953, for example, Ángel Guevara, an ejidatario from San José Huipana, wrote to the federal government to ask for a bracero contract.³² It was the first of 20 requests for socioeconomic aid that Guevara would make during Adolfo Ruiz Cortines's presidency (1952-1958), and he expressed an interest in migrating in 10 of them.³³ Guevara did not state why he was interested in migrating in his initial petition. But his later ones make it clear that his desire to migrate was linked to political and agrarian conflicts that had divided Huipana for decades.

In an October 1955 request, Guevara told President Ruiz Cortines that he was interested in migrating because of a group of armed individuals that had been terrorizing and harassing him and other Huipana residents since 1940, around the same time that conservative Sinarquistas rose to prominence in that community. For a decade and a half, Guevara wrote, these individuals had humiliated local rural workers by constantly threatening them with firearms. In some instances, these threats had escalated to violence, and numerous Huipana residents had been killed, including one of Guevara's brothers and his partners in a musical group. The situation had become so unstable that many local workers refused to leave their houses to work their lands because they feared that they would become the next victims.³⁴

The violence in Huipana soon began to affect Guevara's personal socioeconomic standing. In July 1956, Guevara wrote to President Ruiz Cortines to again ask for assistance. But on this occasion, Guevara wrote from Puruándiro, not Huipana. The parties that had been antagonizing him and others had forced him off his parcel, and he, his children, and his surviving brothers had relocated to the municipal seat. This left Guevara and his loved ones "without a house, land, or tools to work." Guevara also requested federal, state, and municipal authorities to intervene so that his antagonists would stop persecuting him.³⁵ In May of the following year, Guevara wrote to the president once again; he and his family were still in the municipal seat, "suffering through the most abysmal conditions because we have been stripped of our agrarian rights and forced from our homes."³⁶

Guevara's May 1957 letter was the last recorded one that he sent to federal officials. But the situation in Huipana continued deteriorating after Guevara stopped writing. In November

PAN's leadership during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Gómez Morín's desire to emulate Spanish dictator's Miguel Primo de Rivera's industrial and infrastructural development policies also appealed more to urban residents.

³² Summary of a March 5, 1953 letter from Ángel Guevara to C. Secretario, March 10, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 892, expediente 548.1/91, foja sin número. In 1974, Huipana became part of the newly formed municipality of José Sixto Verduzco.

³³ The requests are in AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 892, expedientes 548.1/76 and 548.1/91. In addition to the 10 requests for bracero cards, Guevara made another 10 petitions for aid of some sort. Guevara's wife made some of these requests. In these requests, Guevara also asked for direct financial assistance, or he asked that he be sent musical instruments that he planned to give to his children so they could form a musical band.

³⁴ J. Ángel Guevara to C. Precidente (sic) de la República, October 2, 1955, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 892, expediente 548.1/76, fojas sin número.

³⁵ J. Ángel Guevara to C. Precidente (sic) de la República, undated, received by the federal government on July 5, 1956, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 892, expediente 548.1/76, fojas sin número.

³⁶ J. Ángel Guevara to C. Precidente (sic) de la República, May 1957 (no day given), AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 892, expediente 548.1/76, foja sin número.

1963, Huipana's ejido president (comisariado ejidal) and security chief (*encargado del orden*) asked the military to intervene and restore peace in their community. The officials described a dire situation: groups of armed men roaming through the community at all hours; rural workers afraid to leave their houses because they feared attacks; and a growing population of widows and orphaned children. The lives of Huipana's residents had become "filled with anxiety, heartache, and insecurity, and the differences of opinion within the community have robbed us of our peace, tranquility, and any semblance of order." The petitioning officials also noted that many families had been abandoned, thus implying that local male heads of household had opted to migrate away from Huipana and the violence occurring there.³⁷

When they contacted military officials, Huipana's ejido president and security chief explained that the conflict dividing the community and pushing rural workers to migrate had actually started in 1921. It was around this time that an agrarista group led by Felipe Ramírez became active in Huipana, and as shown by historians Héctor Ortiz Ybarra and Vicente González Méndez, conservative rural workers and landowners, including many who fought as Cristeros, violently attempted to block the efforts of agraristas throughout the municipality during this period. Ortiz Ybarra and González Méndez also noted that some of the individuals involved in these early conflicts migrated so they could escape the violence.³⁸ An ejido was ultimately established in Huipana in 1935, but this only provided a brief respite to the fighting.³⁹ In December 1944, Comisariado Ejidal Donato Silva complained that two active Sinarquistas had been named to the municipal government and had started actively working against the interests of local ejidatarios (as noted in Chapter Three, Puruándiro's municipal government at one point attempted to use the Bracero Program to recruit Sinarquistas).⁴⁰ The emergence of the Sinarquistas coincided with the increased hostilities described by Ángel Guevara in his bracero card requests.

Guevara's bracero card requests and the ejido leadership's plea for military intervention demonstrate that Huipana's conservative Catholic faction was the dominant one in that community. But even local Catholics expressed an interest in migrating as braceros, although they did so from a position of relative strength. In February 1962, Father Tomás Flores wrote to the state government to request bracero cards for Huipana rural workers. The prospective braceros for whom Father Flores was lobbying were interested in investing their potential U.S. earnings in material improvement projects, including a new parish church. Father Flores noted that many in Huipana were poor – he described the community as the "poorest in the region" – but there was no mention that the socioeconomic standing of the prospective braceros interested in building a new church had been impacted by the ongoing conflict in the community.⁴¹ The conflict may have influenced their desire to migrate in an indirect fashion: it is possible, perhaps

³⁷ Pablo García Gordillo to C. Gobernador Const. del Estado, November 13, 1963, AGHPPEM, serie Puruándiro, caja 2, expediente 6, fojas sin número.

³⁸ Héctor Ortiz Ybarra and Vicente González Méndez, *Puruándiro* (Morelia, México: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1980), 239-244.

³⁹ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado San José Huipana, Estado de Michoacán, June 11, 1935, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCI, Número 29, August 2, 1935, 455-456. Unlike other center-western ejidos, all of the Huipana residents eligible to receive an ejido parcel were granted one.

⁴⁰ Donato Silva to Gobernador del Estado, December 4, 1944, AGHPPEM, serie Puruándiro, caja 1, expediente 1, foja sin número.

⁴¹ Tomás Flores to M.I. Sr. Gobernador del Edo. Lic. D. David Franco Rodríguez, February 28, 1962, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, foja 6.

even likely, that the would-be braceros represented by Father Flores knew migration was an option because they had seen Ángel Guevara and others leave Huipana.

A conflict similar to the one in Huipana also motivated rural workers from Comanja, in the Michoacán municipality of Coeneo, to want to migrate as braceros. In May 1963, Andrés Sandoval Castillo asked the state government for bracero cards for himself and 19 other Comanja rural workers.⁴² Sandoval Castillo repeated his request three months later, although this time he only asked for five bracero cards, and this time he explained that he and his fellow prospective braceros were interested in migrating because they did not have access to their own lands. But the reason they did not have lands was because they had not been allowed to take possession of ejido parcels they had been granted use rights to, despite orders issued by the Agrarian Department.⁴³ Sandoval Castillo requested a bracero card once again in May 1964, presumably because he remained landless.⁴⁴

Sandoval Castillo's request failed to directly mention that a decades-long conflict between Comanja's ejidatarios and conservative opponents of the government was what kept him and others from using their ejido parcels. An ejido was established in Comanja in July 1921, five years before the Cristero Rebellion began.⁴⁵ But tensions between Comanja Catholics and revolutionaries emerged with the conflict; at one point during the rebellion, local officials successfully lobbied for the parish church to be converted into a public schoolhouse.⁴⁶ Hostilities between the two camps escalated again when the municipal government interfered in the community's internal politics. In October 1950, following a shootout in Comanja that involved ejidatarios from the nearby Zacapu ejido of Naranja and resulted in one death, Coeneo's municipal president intervened and removed Comanja's jefe de tenencia (community chief) from office. In response to this action, Luisa Jiménez, the president of Comanja's Women's League, acknowledged that ejidatarios there had recently had troubles with their counterparts from Naranja. But she worried that the removal of the community chief had been unwarranted, especially since it appeared that those who had attacked the Naranja ejidatarios in October 1950 were not actually residents of Comanja.⁴⁷

It soon became clear that Coeneo's municipal president had instigated the fatal shootout so he could install two of his allies, Melecio Juárez and Alfredo Hernández, as Comanja's new community chiefs. Juárez had reportedly provided ammunition to the parties involved in the October 1950 shootout, and Hernández owned a "scandalous" bar where the community's most

⁴² Andrés Sandoval Castillo, Lista de Aspirantes a Braceros Para el Vecino País de Norte América, del Pueblo de Comanja del Municipio de Coeneo, Mich., y que se Formula Para su Aprobación en Gobernación, May 2, 1963, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, foja 88.

⁴³ Andrés Sandoval to C. Lic. Agustín Arriaga Rivera, August 14, 1963, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 20, foja 192.

⁴⁴ Carlos Martínez Aristizábal to Sr. Profr. Leodegario López Ramírez, May 7, 1964, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 5, expediente 16, foja 110. Sandoval Castillo made his request on May 6, 1964, but it is no longer stored in any archival collection I consulted. This document is a memorandum in which Martínez Aristizábal informs López Ramírez that he will be forwarding Sandoval Castillo's request to him.

⁴⁵ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>.

⁴⁶ P. Elías Calles, Acuerdo por el cual se destinan al uso de escuelas, los anexos a los templos de los pueblos de Comanja y Zipuajo, del Municipio de Coeneo, Estado de Michoacán, March 7, 1927, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XLI, Número 21, Sección Primera, March 25, 1927, 1.

⁴⁷ Luisa Jiménez to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional en el Estado, October 31, 1950, AGHPM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, foja sin número.

“disorderly” residents routinely gathered to drink and randomly fire their weapons.⁴⁸ To compound matters for Comanja’s ejidatarios, Hernández was known to have ties to members of the PAN, the conservative political party that opposed the agrarian reform. To ease the tensions in the community, state-level officials recommended in January 1951 that Emigdio Cervantes Calixto, a “well regarded and hard working” ejidatario who enjoyed the support of most of Comanja’s residents, replace Hernández.⁴⁹

But Coeneo’s municipal government and Comanja’s conservative faction dug in their heels. Municipal President David Herrera Tapia refused to remove Hernández. Herrera Tapia defended his decision by stating that Hernández and Melecio Juárez had been appointed because they were both honorable men who had no ties to either of the Comanja factions that were battling each other; the municipal president feared that replacing them with Emigdio Cervantes Calixto would only escalate the conflict.⁵⁰ A group of Comanja residents seconded Herrera Tapia. Although they professed to be neutral parties, they heartily endorsed Hernández, and they claimed that the troubles in the community were the result of an outside “agitator” who would hold meetings whenever he visited relatives in the community and “actively foment a constant state of conflict” between the two opposing camps.⁵¹ With both factions refusing to yield any ground, state officials asked the military to continually monitor the conflict until it was resolved.⁵²

But the conflict continued, and it soon hampered the operations of the ejido. In October 1951, Comanja’s comisariado ejidal, Aurelio Cervantes Calixto (who was likely the brother of would-be community chief Emigdio Cervantes Calixto), complained to the state government that the community “lacked authorities who could protect even the most basic rights of its people.” Despite the constant shootouts between the two opposing camps, the sitting community chief never opened his offices. The community chief had also refused to meet with a visiting official from the federal Agrarian Department. The visiting official was in Comanja to investigate the status of use rights within the ejido, but he needed the community chief’s signature before he could proceed. However, the community chief – presumably still Alfredo Hernández – made it clear that he would not sign any documents or even meet with the agrarian official. As a result, the ejido’s affairs were stuck in bureaucratic limbo.⁵³ Hernández’s reluctance to sanction the activities of the agrarian reform community is not surprising, since, as noted above, he had known ties to the conservative PAN.

For the rest of the 1950s, neither of Comanja’s factions was ever satisfied with who was formally in charge of the community, and so the clashes dragged on for the rest of the decade.

⁴⁸ Esteban Arroyo and others to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, November 1, 1950, AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, fojas sin número.

⁴⁹ Antonio Gil Cardona to Ciudadano Secretario General de Gobierno, January 29, 1951, AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, foja sin número.

⁵⁰ David Herrera Tapia to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, January 6, 1950; David Herrera Tapia to Ciudadano Secretario General de Gobierno, February 16, 1951; AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, fojas sin número. Herrera Tapia mistakenly dated his first letter as being written in 1950. The receipt stamp indicates that the state government received the letter on January 9, 1951, and in the letter Herrera Tapia refers to events that occurred in the autumn of 1950.

⁵¹ J. Jesús Castillo and others to Ciudadano Secretario de Gobierno, January 11, 1951, AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, fojas sin número.

⁵² Lic. Emilio Romero Espinosa to Ciudadano Comandante de la XXI Zona Militar, February 14, 1951, AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, foja sin número.

⁵³ Aurelio Cervantes Calixto to C. Gral. Dámaso Cárdenas, October 29, 1951, AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, fojas sin número.

Frustrated that the two camps could not agree on who should be community chief, the municipal government appointed one member from each camp to jointly hold the office in March 1956, but the leaders of the ejido and the Women's League immediately protested that one of the co-chiefs was a known murderer.⁵⁴ In May of the following year, these same leaders, as well as the president of the local Parents' Association, made it known that they would not recognize the authority of the new community leadership because they had been "imposed" by the municipal government. These same individuals expressed weariness with the numerous "impositions that have damaged our personal interests and robbed our homes of their tranquility."⁵⁵ Four months later, after the municipal president and the sitting community chief refused to attend a plebiscite convened to elect new leaders, Comanja's residents prepared for a new round of battles, and they informed state-level officials that the municipal president was ultimately responsible for any bloodshed that occurred.⁵⁶

It was this chaos that kept prospective Comanja braceros like Andrés Sandoval Castillo from using their ejido parcels. Like in Huipana, the root cause of the Comanja conflict was the divide between supporters of government initiatives and conservative Catholic opponents. But unlike in Huipana, where conservative Catholics were the dominant faction, neither camp gained supremacy in Comanja. Instead, there was a ceaseless and violent back-and-forth while each faction attempted to gain the upper hand. As a result, local ejido leaders and federal agrarian authorities could not perform their duties, and rural workers like Andrés Sandoval Castillo set their sights on the United States.

In both Huipana and Comanja, Catholic opposition to the agrarian reform sparked internal conflicts that caused supporters of land redistribution to want to migrate as braceros. Even though, as noted in Chapter One, ejidatarios were officially barred from receiving bracero contracts, prospective braceros like Ángel Guevara and Andrés Sandoval Castillo hoped that federal and state officials would look favorably on them, especially since they had been forced off their parcels or prevented from ever using them. However, in other Lerma-Chapala Basin communities, it was the conservative opponents of land redistribution who were interested in migrating, although they had to be more circumspect when explaining why they wanted to leave the country.

For example, in May 1963, Cornelio Maldonado Pulido, the comisariado ejidal in Changuitiro, in the Michoacán municipality of Churintzio, wrote to the state government. Maldonado Pulido was writing on behalf of six local rural workers who were interested in migrating as braceros. The ejido leader's language was stark and simple; he noted that all six prospective braceros had been born and raised in Changuitiro. He also made clear that they were landless non-ejidatarios.⁵⁷ Thus, they were eligible to receive bracero cards.

One of the prospective braceros was Pedro García Maldonado, whose father, Leopoldo García Guillén, had been one of the many Changuitiro rural workers who did not receive use

⁵⁴ Gabino Villagómez Acosta to C. Lic. J. Jesús Ortega Calderón, April 16, 1956, AGHPPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, foja sin número; Zeferino Nieves Espinoza and María Luisa Jiménez Flores to C. Oficial Mayor de Gobierno, March 22, 1956, AGHPPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, foja sin número.

⁵⁵ Zeferino Nieves E., Juan Nieves Pedroza, and M. Luisa Jiménez to C. Secretario General de Gobierno, May 23, 1957, AGHPPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, fojas sin número.

⁵⁶ Eusebio Nieto Cervantes to Ciudadano Secretario General de Gobierno, October 1, 1957, AGHPPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente sin número, foja sin número.

⁵⁷ Cornelio Maldonado Pulido to Ciudadano Profesor Manuel López Pérez, May 20, 1963, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, foja 76.

rights when an ejido was established in that community in early 1936.⁵⁸ As in Huipana, a small group of agraristas became active in Changuitiro during the early 1920s. But when the Cristero Rebellion began, most of Changuitiro's residents sympathized with or joined the rebels, and they constantly attacked their agrarista neighbors. During the mid-1930s, in the midst of the expropriation and redistribution process, many residents proudly boasted to visiting government officials that they had fought under the banners of Ramón Aguilar, one of Michoacán's most prominent Cristero leaders.⁵⁹ When the ejido was finally established, 54 of the 154 rural workers deemed eligible to receive use rights were left out of the agrarian reform community. According to government officials, these exclusions occurred because there were not sufficient lands near Changuitiro at that time to grant use rights to all the eligible workers.⁶⁰ But according to oral tradition in the community, these rural workers were former Cristeros who refused use rights because they believed the agrarian reform was an immoral assault on their religious values.⁶¹

By the mid-1940s, however, Changuitiro's former Cristeros had experienced a change of heart. In February 1946, the community's non-ejidatarios filed a request to expand the ejido. Two years later, the federal government denied the expansion request.⁶² After the denial, the non-ejidatarios approached the ejidatarios in hopes they could negotiate an informal arrangement that would allow them access to ejido lands. But Changuitiro's ejidatarios were not ready to share the lands that they had fought and bled for, and they were especially loath to share them with the neighbors who had opposed their efforts during the 1920s and 1930s. With the ejidatarios refusing to cede any ground, Changuitiro's agrarian battles began anew, only now the conflict's central issue was not whether lands would be redistributed, but rather if the former Cristeros who had opposed land redistribution would be allowed to join the ejido.

Despite the resumption of hostilities in Changuitiro, there were some non-ejidatarios there who either remained uninterested in joining the ejido or did not have the desire to participate in the agrarian conflict. These Changuitiro residents decided to leave the community as braceros almost as soon as the program started. Some were like Pedro García Maldonado; that is, they were the sons of men who had not joined the ejido during the 1930s. Others, like Ladislao Fuentes Fajardo, had been active Cristeros (interestingly, Ladislao's older brothers, Teófilo and Porfirio, were two of Changuitiro's most prominent agraristas).⁶³ But Changuitiro's braceros could not fully escape the agrarian violence that engulfed the community during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In December 1955, a shootout between the rival camps led to the deaths

⁵⁸ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Changuitiro, Estado de Michoacán, January 6, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CI, Número 10, Segunda Sección, March 11, 1937, 8-10. Leopoldo García Guillén was my grandfather; Pedro García Maldonado is my uncle.

⁵⁹ Ing. Humberto Beltrán M., August 5, 1936, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Delegación Michoacán, expediente 992. Beltrán was the engineer who in 1935 surveyed the lands that were expropriated and redistributed. Unfortunately, since I first consulted this archival collection in December 2009, its contents have been reorganized, and these documents are currently unavailable for viewing. For more on Ramón Aguilar, see Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 176-177.

⁶⁰ Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Changuitiro, 10.

⁶¹ My parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were born in Changuitiro. Leopoldo García Guillén was my paternal grandfather. Pedro García Maldonado is my paternal uncle.

⁶² Miguel Alemán, Resolución sobre segunda ampliación de ejido al poblado Changuitiro, en Churintzio, Mich., October 27, 1948, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CLXXII, Número 30, Sección Primera, February 7, 1949, 9.

⁶³ Lista de Braceros de Churintzio, undated, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 5, foja sin número. Teófilo Fuentes Fajardo was one of my maternal great-grandfathers.

of David Maldonado Mendoza and David Fuentes Aguilar, two braceros who had just returned from the United States.⁶⁴ This clash effectively ended Changuitiro's agrarian conflict; following Maldonado Mendoza's and Fuentes Aguilar's deaths, some non-ejidatarios left Changuitiro altogether, while others were finally allowed to join the ejido.⁶⁵

Conservative Opposition, Landlessness, and Dependency in Jalisco

All the conflicts just discussed occurred in communities where conservative Catholic opposition failed to prevent the establishment of ejidos. In Jalisco, these types of conflicts played out differently. There, conservative landowners with deep ties to the Catholic Church effectively mobilized to prevent the creation of ejidos. This successful opposition contributed to the development of a landless and dependent workforce that then became interested in leaving the country through the Bracero Program.

The lack of ejidos in Jalisco municipalities like Tepatitlán meant that prospective braceros from there almost always pointed to their landlessness, their lack of work, or their low wages as *jornaleros* (day laborers) as the reasons they were interested in migrating. For example, in July 1960, Pedro Carmona Vera, a rural worker from the Tepatitlán community of San José de Gracia, wrote to President Adolfo López Mateos to request a bracero card (this community should not be confused with the San José de Gracia in Michoacán that Luis González y González studied).⁶⁶ Carmona Vera described himself as a jornalero who worked on local estates and orchards. But work was becoming increasingly scarce in the region, and on the few days per week he found employment, Carmona Vera had to travel to increasingly remote locations. Given the scarcity of work, Carmona Vera wanted to leave for the United States as soon as he possibly could.⁶⁷ Three months later, one of Carmona Vera's neighbors, Jacinto Vázquez, also requested a bracero card. Like Carmona Vera, Vázquez was a landless jornalero, but his wages were so low that he could no longer support his family.⁶⁸

Carmona Vera and Vázquez were landless because conservative Tepatitlán landowners had opposed the agrarian reform since the 1920s. During the Cristero Rebellion, Tepatitlán landowners supported the rebels by suspending agricultural activities on their estates so that "employees, peons, and other interested parties" could fight against the government.⁶⁹ Local rural workers fought zealously, and Cristero activity became so widespread in Los Altos that federal and state authorities forcibly resettled rural residents in municipal seats, launched aerial bombing raids, and confiscated grains and livestock so that they would not fall into the hands of

⁶⁴ David Maldonado Mendoza was my maternal grandfather; his father had refused use rights when Changuitiro's ejido was established and had even threatened to leave the community in protest of the land redistribution process. David Fuentes Aguilar was my maternal great-uncle; he was the son of ejidatario Teófilo Fuentes Fajardo, but he had been too young to receive use rights when the ejido was first established.

⁶⁵ Adolfo López Mateos, Resolución sobre nuevas adjudicaciones de parcela a ejidatarios del poblado Changuitiro, en Churintzio, Mich., September 20, 1962, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCLXIII, Número 41, April 18, 1964, 19-20.

⁶⁶ González y González, *Pueblo en vilo*.

⁶⁷ Pedro Carmona Vera to Sr. Licenciado Adolfo López (sic) Mateos, July 19, 1960, AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 719, expediente 546.6/407, foja sin número.

⁶⁸ Summary of a September 18, 1960 letter from J. Jacinto Vázquez, September 27, 1960, AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 720, expediente 546.6/548, foja sin número.

⁶⁹ El General de División Secretario Joaquín Amaro a Las Autoridades Civiles, a las Autoridades Militares o a Quién Corresponda, June 1, 1927, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-2-927, serie Guerra, caja 192, catálogo JAL/3352, inventario 6142, folios 170-214.

“fanatics.”⁷⁰ The landowners’ support of the rebellion is not surprising. As noted above, Jalisco landowners, particularly in Los Altos, genuinely believed that an agrarian economy centered on private property was divinely ordained. Once proponents of the agrarian reform started fighting for the government during the rebellion, the landowners proved especially willing to combat what they interpreted to be a blasphemous attempt to upend the status quo.

After the Cristero Rebellion, some Tepatitlán landowners used a bureaucratic strategy to skirt the agrarian reform: *fraccionamientos*, the division of their estates via sales into holdings that were small enough to be exempt from expropriation and redistribution (this is what landowners in Presa del Aguacate, Guanajuato had attempted to do).⁷¹ Many of these sales only existed on paper; because the buyers were individuals close to the original owners – spouses, children, other relatives, or trusted employees – these owners still effectively controlled the entirety of their holdings. The practice was so prevalent and successful in Los Altos that in a January 1958 letter to then-presidential candidate Adolfo López Mateos, Manuel Pedroza Guerra, the president of the Lagos de Moreno Rotary Club and Livestock Association, cited it as the primary reason that the agrarian reform remained “incomplete” in the region.⁷² The pace of land redistribution in Los Altos municipalities like Tepatitlán did indeed lag behind the rest of the center-west. Between 1915, when federal law first allowed for the establishment of ejidos, and 1958, when Pedroza Guerra wrote his letter, only one ejido was established in Tepatitlán. In contrast, 10 ejidos were established in Churintzio, 29 in Coeneo, 53 in Puruándiro, and 141 in Pénjamo during that same period, despite the fierce opposition of local conservatives.⁷³

Fraccionamiento challenges in Tepatitlán communities like Mezcala delayed the creation of ejidos for decades.⁷⁴ But in San José de Gracia, where prospective braceros Pedro Carmona Vera and Jacinto Vázquez lived, local landowners eschewed bureaucratic maneuverings and used violence to block the expropriation and redistribution of their holdings. In November 1948, rural

⁷⁰ V. Álvarez to C. Gobernador Constitucional Interino del Estado, April 29, 1927, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-2-927, serie Guerra, caja 193, catálogo LAB/3347, inventario 6151, foja sin número; Margarito Ramírez to Sr. Presidente Municipal, April 29, 1927, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-2-927, serie Guerra, caja 193, catálogo PO/3315, inventario 6152, foja 1; El Secretario General de Gobierno to C. Presidente Municipal, January 21, 1929, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-2-929, serie Guerra, caja 194, inventario 6192, fojas sin número. See also Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 84, 164.

⁷¹ As I will explain in more detail in Chapter Five, the federal Agrarian Code stipulated that estates that had less than 150 irrigable hectares and/or less than 300 seasonally watered (*temporal*) hectares were exempt from expropriation. A.L. Rodríguez, Código Agrario de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, April 9, 1934, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LXXXIII, Número 29, April 12, 1934, 597-618.

⁷² Manuel Pedroza Guerra, Estudio de diversas problemas de carácter económico-social que afectan a la región de Los Altos de Jalisco y medidas que se sugieren para resolverlos: Trabajo presentado a la consideración del Sr. Lic. Adolfo López Mateos, candidato del Partido Revolucionario Institucional a la Presidencia de la República, por conducto del Sr. Lic. Manuel Moreno Sánchez, January 28, 1958, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, clasificación G-1-958-59, serie Política Estatal y Nacional, caja 161, inventario 3541, foja sin número.

⁷³ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. The count for Puruándiro includes ejidos that are now in the municipality of José Sixto Verduzco, which was established in 1974.

⁷⁴ José López Portillo, Resolución sobre dotación de tierras, solicitada por vecinos del poblado denominado Mezcala, Municipio de Tepatitlán, Jal. (Registrada con el número 11354), June 30, 1980, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCCLXI, Número 14, Segunda Sección, July 18, 1980, 37-40. Rural workers in Mezcala first asked for lands in 1942, but that request was denied because the properties of Ramón García Valadéz were deemed exempt from expropriation. Another land request was filed in 1954, and in 1956 a government surveyor determined that García Valadéz’s holdings were large enough to be expropriated and redistributed. Jalisco’s state government provisionally approved the creation of an ejido in 1958, but García Valadéz’s widow and sons immediately challenged the provisional grant. The case was not resolved until 1980, when the federal government finally approved the establishment of an ejido in Mezcala.

workers there gathered to determine how many of them were eligible to petition for ejido lands. The assembly was interrupted by a group of landowners accompanied by armed guards who were ready to open fire. There was no violence that day because the residents had taken precautionary measures, but the census of eligible rural workers was not successfully completed. Another assembly was scheduled for the final week of February 1950, and J. Jesús Medina, the leader of San José de Gracia's agraristas, asked the commander of the local military detachment to send soldiers to guarantee that the assembly could complete its task.⁷⁵ But the requested assistance appears to have never materialized. Two weeks after the assembly was scheduled to take place, Tepatitlán Municipal President Zenaido González Ruvalcaba requested that federal forces be sent to San José de Gracia so that they could put an end to the "numerous scandals and bloody acts" that had occurred in the community.⁷⁶ No ejido was ever established in San José de Gracia.

Neither Pedro Carmona Vera nor Jacinto Vázquez stated in their bracero card requests if they had supported or opposed the agrarian reform. Whatever their personal opinions on land redistribution, their socioeconomic opportunities in San José de Gracia were limited because landowners there had blocked the creation of an ejido. If they had supported the agrarian reform, they had little to no hope of acquiring lands. But if they had supported the landowners' efforts to stymie land redistribution, then that decision had backfired, since they now had to subsist on low wages and travel from estate to estate in search of employment.

To make matters worse for Carmona Vera and Vázquez, San José de Gracia landowners were dismayed by the prospect of their workers leaving for the United States, so they began meddling in the bracero recruitment and selection process. In his July 1960 request, Carmona Vera noted that landowners had interfered and prevented local rural workers from acquiring bracero cards during the drawing organized by Tepatitlán's municipal government. Carmona Vera did not specify how the landowners were interfering, but as shown in Chapter Three, the bracero selection process was often influenced by political and monetary considerations. If Tepatitlán landowners were politically close to the municipal officials tasked with selecting braceros, or if they bribed them, then it is plausible that local rural workers were excluded from the selection process. And if Tepatitlán landowners were as successful in preventing rural workers from receiving bracero cards as they were in undermining the agrarian reform, then Carmona Vera's only migratory option may have been entering the United States without a bracero contract.

The Case of Cupareo

Conservative Catholic opposition to revolutionary policies also prompted rural workers from Cupareo, in the Guanajuato municipality of Salvatierra, to want to migrate as braceros, albeit in a slightly different manner than the cases discussed above. In February 1956, Cupareo residents met with local school personnel and informed them they wanted to build a new primary schoolhouse, and that they were willing to use "every means at their disposal" to achieve their goal. The teachers informed the residents that the federal Public Education Secretariat (SEP by its Spanish initials) would only pay for half of the new schoolhouse's construction costs; the

⁷⁵ J. Jesús Medina to C. Comandante de la 15/a. Zona Militar, February 22, 1950, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1950, caja 11, foja sin número.

⁷⁶ Zenaido González Ruvalcaba to Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 11, 1950, AHJ, fondo Gobernación, sin clasificar, año 1950, caja 25, foja sin número.

residents were responsible for paying the other half. The following month, Juan Alonso Villagómez wrote to President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. Because local agricultural production was hampered by the small size of ejido parcels – according to Villagómez, ejido parcels in Cupareo measured 2.5 hectares on average – and by neighboring ejidos limiting access to irrigation water, Villagómez feared that Cupareo’s residents would be unable to raise their corresponding half of the school construction costs.⁷⁷ Villagómez told the president that community members were willing to donate lands for the new school site as well as help the SEP’s construction crews. He also asked that 1,000 bracero cards be sent to Cupareo. Those that received cards would contribute \$150 pesos to the school construction project.⁷⁸

Villagómez’s letter failed to mention that Cupareo lacked a schoolhouse because local Catholics had opposed the government’s public education initiatives in the 1930s. A school was inaugurated there in early 1930, and SEP Inspector José Macías Padilla reported that the villagers had enthusiastically prepared for the event. Five thousand rural workers reportedly attended the inauguration, which featured a speech by Guanajuato Governor Agustín Arroyo.⁷⁹ In April 1931, Macías Padilla noted that Cupareo’s residents loved the school and the “progress” associated with it.⁸⁰ But there were signs of trouble when he returned to the community the following spring. The school had been abandoned because the vast majority of Cupareo’s residents were unhappy with the teacher working there.⁸¹

According to SEP Inspector Roberto Oropeza Nájera, who visited Cupareo in early 1932, the school’s abandonment was the result of a “deep and ancient political and religious divide.” Although an ejido had been established in Cupareo in 1927, conservative Catholics who opposed revolutionary policies were still battling the government’s supporters, and the clashes had impacted the school’s operation. Oropeza Nájera attempted to mediate between the two sides, but his efforts were in vain, and he advised the teacher working in Cupareo to abstain from openly favoring one faction over the other.⁸² The situation only deteriorated further; a mere three months after Oropeza Nájera’s inspection, one of his colleagues reported that the

⁷⁷ P. Elías Calles, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos, promovida por vecinos de la congregación de Cupareo, Estado de Guanajuato, June 16, 1927, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XLIII, Número 41, Sección Segunda, August 18, 1927, 1-5; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de ampliación de ejidos al poblado Cupareo, Estado de Guanajuato, June 17, 1940, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CXXII, Número 17, Sección Primera, September 21, 1940, 9-11. Villagómez was exaggerating the small size of ejido parcels in Cupareo. In 1927, 237 ejidatarios received use rights to 1,615.65 hectares; this meant that the mean parcel size was 6.8 hectares, although parcel size ranged between 3 and 11 hectares. In 1940, 17 ejidatarios were granted use rights to an additional 72 hectares; the mean parcel size in this expansion was 4.2 hectares.

⁷⁸ Juan Alonso Villagómez and others to C. Don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, March 2, 1956, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 761, expediente 534.3/1028, foja sin número.

⁷⁹ José Macías Padilla to C. Jefe del Depto. de Escuelas Rurales, Primarias Foráneas e Incorporación Cultural Indígena, March 11, 1930, AGN, fondo Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Educación Primaria, Estados y Territorios, Guanajuato, caja 37746, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

⁸⁰ José Macías Padilla, Informe Sintético de Visita de Inspección, April 23, 1931, AGN, fondo Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Educación Primaria, Estados y Territorios, Guanajuato, caja 37746, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

⁸¹ José Macías Padilla, Informe Sintético de Visita de Inspección, March 1, 1932, AGN, fondo Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Educación Primaria, Estados y Territorios, Guanajuato, caja 37746, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

⁸² Roberto Oropeza Nájera, Informe Sintético de Visita de Inspección, February 21, 1933, AGN, fondo Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Educación Primaria, Estados y Territorios, Guanajuato, caja 37746, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

schoolhouse's walls had started to crumble and that the villagers were loath to cooperate with the needed repairs.⁸³

Cupareo's school had become a target during the ongoing conflict because faithful Catholics fiercely opposed the revolutionary public education curriculum. Since the 1920s, center-western governors had hoped that a robust public education system could help break the Catholic Church's social and cultural power in the region.⁸⁴ These efforts received a boost in the 1930s when SEP officials started implementing a socialist curriculum. The principal goal of the new curriculum, which became mandatory after the Constitution was amended in 1934, was to "de-fanaticize" Mexican Catholics by nurturing class-consciousness in students, teaching students about the "unjust and ignoble" ills caused by capitalist exploitation, and championing the redemptive values of land redistribution and labor organization. Public schools would be co-educational, and sex education and family planning were introduced into the curriculum. Not surprisingly, faithful Catholics reacted with horror; they believed that the revolutionary state was needlessly usurping a duty that belonged to families and the Church, and they feared that the new curriculum would lead to the degeneration and perversion of Mexico's youth.⁸⁵

As shown by Ben Fallaw in his examination of religious conflicts in 1930s Guanajuato, Salvatierra was one of the municipalities where faithful Catholics most fiercely resisted the implementation of the new curriculum. Although the teachers who worked in the municipality during the 1920s and 1930s had been optimistic that their efforts to promote both education initiatives and the redistribution of lands would succeed, Catholic fears that public education would undermine moral values and municipal-level official antipathy dashed these hopes. Many of the most vocal opponents of the new curriculum were those who had fought against the government as Cristeros during the 1920s. Opposition to public education in Salvatierra was so widespread during the 1930s that three schools had to shutter their doors at the end of the 1934-1935 academic year, although it is not clear if Cupareo's was among those that closed.⁸⁶

That Cupareo's residents would express an interest in building a schoolhouse, and that they would be willing to pay half the costs and even donate the lands it would be built on, indicates a significant change in attitude towards public education. Unfortunately, the available documentation does not detail what suddenly caused Cupareo's residents to become interested in helping to build a new schoolhouse. The likeliest explanation is that the socialist curriculum was no longer an issue. During the 1940s, President Manuel Ávila Camacho's government removed socialist values from the public education curriculum, and the SEP started reining in activist teachers.⁸⁷ Even if the teachers working in Cupareo remained committed to the socialist curriculum, they may have negotiated a compromise with the parents of school-aged children, as occurred in some of the Puebla and Sonora communities studied by Mary Kay Vaughan.⁸⁸

⁸³ Arnulfo Ochoa, Informe Sintético de Visita de Inspección, May 23, 1933, AGN, fondo Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Educación Primaria, Estados y Territorios, Guanajuato, caja 37746, expediente 20, fojas sin número.

⁸⁴ Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*.

⁸⁵ Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 29-36.

⁸⁶ Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico*, 205-208.

⁸⁷ Tanalís Padilla, "Rural Education, Political Radicalism, and *Normalista* Identity in Mexico After 1940," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 341-343.

⁸⁸ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*. Vaughan examined the efforts of teachers and their relationship with local residents in two Puebla and two Sonora communities, and she showed that the teachers that enjoyed the most

Whatever ultimately prompted the desire to build a schoolhouse, the Bracero Program was seen as the means for providing something that Cupareo lacked because of its past religiously inspired opposition to the Mexican state.

Conclusion

This chapter explored why rural workers from the Lerma-Chapala Basin were eager to migrate as braceros. In their written requests to federal and state authorities, prospective braceros often cited socioeconomic difficulties – such as landlessness, crop losses, or low wages – as the reason they wanted to leave the country. This is not surprising, since migration scholars have long highlighted poor socioeconomic conditions as one of the principal motives that push migrants out of sending countries and regions.

But as shown above, conservative Catholic opposition to the revolutionary state profoundly influenced the socioeconomic standing of Lerma-Chapala Basin prospective braceros. Ángel Guevara of Huipana, Michoacán was landless because a decades-long intra-community conflict between proponents and opponents of the agrarian reform had forced him off of his lands. Jacinto Vázquez of San José de Gracia, Jalisco had to subsist on the low wages paid to day laborers because conservative landowners there had successfully prevented the redistribution of lands. And the residents of Cupareo, Guanajuato needed to rebuild the local schoolhouse because it had fallen into disrepair after local Catholics objected to the revolutionary curriculum.

Once these prospective braceros' socioeconomic standing deteriorated and the Bracero Program began, they could tap into migrant networks that began coalescing during the late 1920s, when religious opposition to the revolutionary state manifested itself violently during the Cristero Rebellion. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Lerma-Chapala Basin was one of the epicenters of the conflict, and the majority of Mexicans who entered the United States during the late 1920s and early 1930s were from the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán. While it is difficult to quantify how many Cristero-era migrants were from the Lerma-Chapala Basin, there were enough that rural workers from the region knew that migration was a viable option. And when the Mexican state sanctioned the departure of rural workers as braceros, those impacted by continuing conflicts jumped at the opportunity to leave the country.

Many of these prospective braceros implied in their requests that migration was their last resort to secure their economic wellbeing. While some of these would-be migrants might have prospered if Catholic-related conflicts had not undermined the agrarian reform, being a beneficiary of the land redistribution process did not preclude rural workers from wanting to migrate as braceros. As I will show in Chapter Five, the internal mechanics of the agrarian reform adversely affected Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidatarios to such a degree that they too began requesting bracero cards.

Chapter Five

“Our Frightful Misery”: The Agrarian Reform’s Political Flaws and Bracero Emigration from the Lerma-Chapala Basin

In March 1945, Ángel Sandoval Coronel wrote to Michoacán Governor José María Mendoza Pardo from Jesús del Monte, a community in the municipality of Maravatío. Sandoval Coronel was writing on behalf of himself and other Jesús del Monte rural workers who had formally requested that an ejido be established there six years earlier. The would-be ejidatarios had been told when they filed their petition that survey engineers from Zitácuaro would soon arrive in their community to begin the land redistribution process. But the engineers had never arrived in Jesús del Monte and no lands had been redistributed there. Without lands, Sandoval Coronel and his neighbors had “no means to make a living.” However, they believed there was a way to “remedy the disastrous economic situation we are experiencing”: migrating to the United States as braceros, which is what their counterparts in La Nopalera, another Maravatío community that was awaiting the resolution of their ejido request, had already done. Sandoval Coronel hoped that the governor would send him and his neighbors bracero cards, especially since their departure would not affect local agricultural production.¹

An ejido was established in Jesús del Monte in 1951, 11 years after the initial request for lands had been made. But the ejido may not have been much of a boon for the community. Seventy-three rural workers were granted lands, but the federal government only authorized the redistribution of 131 hectares. None of the redistributed lands had access to irrigation water, and because federal agrarian officials determined that there were not sufficient lands to carve out individual parcels, the lands would have to be used collectively by all the ejidatarios.² The situation was even more dire in La Nopalera. They had requested ejido lands in 1941, but federal agrarian authorities declared that there were no eligible lands near enough to that community. As a result, even though 88 La Nopalera rural workers were eligible to receive lands, their ejido request was denied in 1948.³

The experiences of the prospective braceros from Jesús del Monte reflect a set of political factors, distinct from those I examined in Chapter Four, that influenced the socioeconomic standing of would-be migrants from the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Like numerous other prospective braceros in the region, Sandoval Coronel and his neighbors were landless. But their landlessness was not the byproduct of conservative Catholic opposition to revolutionary policies, but rather the result of the government’s slow response to their request for ejido lands. Jesús del Monte’s rural workers access to lands was contingent on the official decision regarding their petition. And because the government was taking so long to decide whether or not it would sanction the establishment of an ejido, Alfredo Sandoval Coronel and the other would-be ejidatarios decided it would be better to migrate.

This chapter examines prospective braceros from the Lerma-Chapala Basin whose desire to migrate was influenced by the internal workings of the state-sponsored agrarian reform. Following the 1910 Revolution, the Mexican government adopted land redistribution as one of

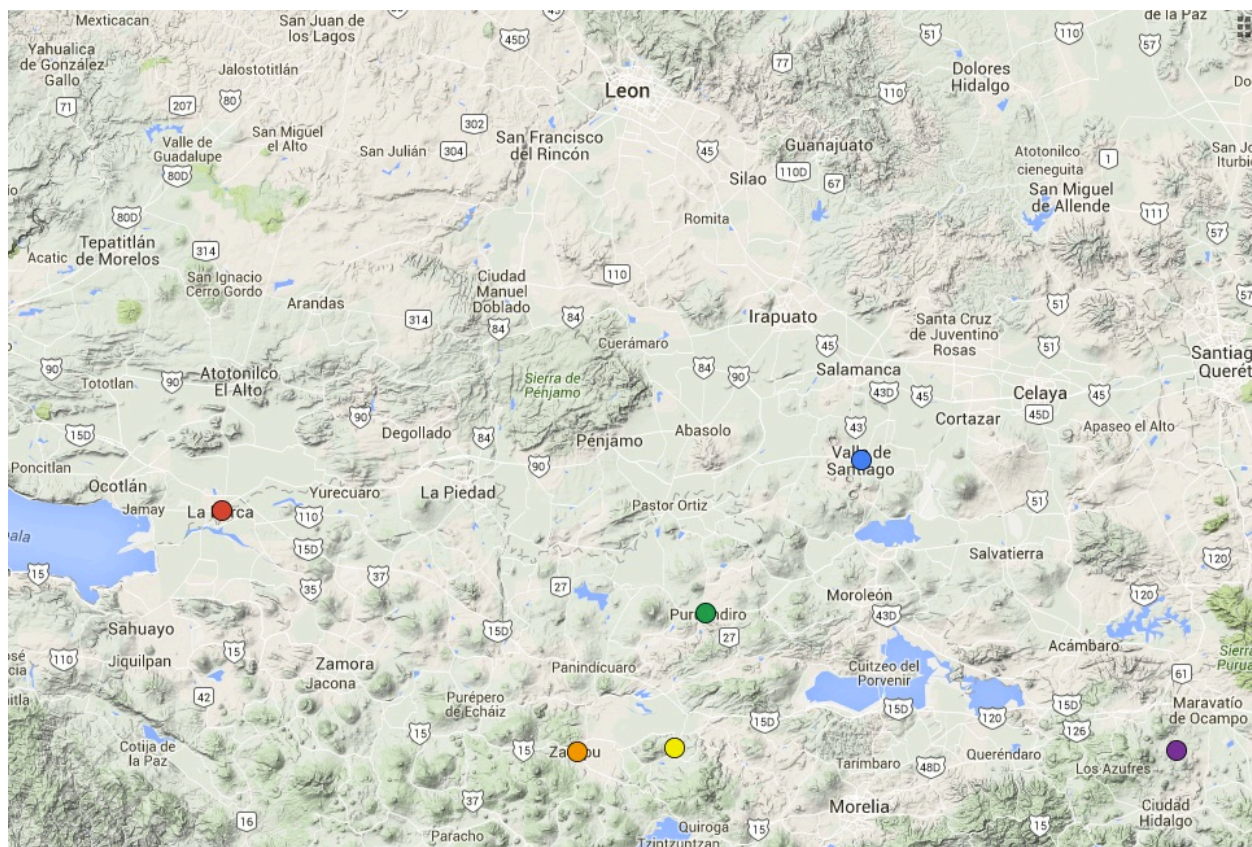
¹ Ángel Sandoval Coronel to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 10, 1945, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 106.

² Miguel Alemán, Resolución sobre dotación de ejido al poblado Jesús del Monte, en Maravatío, Mich., November 28, 1951, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CXCI, Número 29, August 2, 1952, 6-7.

³ Miguel Alemán, Resolución sobre dotación de tierras al poblado La Nopalera, en Maravatío, Mich., March 24, 1948, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CLXVIII, Número 43, June 22, 1948, 5-6.

its central goals. Officials decided that the best way to redistribute lands would be for the government to expropriate private estates, retain ultimate ownership of expropriated lands, and then grant interested and eligible rural workers use rights to individual parcels. The central role assumed by the government in the redistribution process meant that federal agrarian officials decided which estates could be expropriated, which rural workers were eligible to receive use rights, and which land requests would be approved or denied. It also placed limits on would-be and actual ejidatarios, since they had to operate within the parameters established by the government. And when rural workers received insufficient or poor quality lands, had difficulty accessing official credit, or had their ejido petitions denied, they became interested in participating in the Bracero Program, despite the policy that barred ejidatarios from receiving bracero cards.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the agrarian politics of the 1910 Revolution, the decision to adopt a land redistribution policy centered on state ownership of lands and the distribution of use rights, and the policies that structured the agrarian reform. It then shifts to an examination of prospective braceros who were hampered by the agrarian reform's internal mechanics: some ejidos did not receive enough lands; many ejidatarios were granted use rights to poor quality lands that were susceptible to weather-related crop losses; others had difficulty securing officially-sanctioned credit, while those that did secure loans found themselves burdened by onerous repayment terms. And during the final years of the Bracero Program, young would-be migrants had fewer opportunities to acquire use rights because the federal and state administrations of the bracero period no longer prioritized land redistribution. The chapter ends with a discussion of prospective braceros who expressed an interest in investing their earnings in material improvement projects, like potable water systems. Although not directly connected to the administration of the agrarian reform, these projects were also hampered by official policies.



Map 5.1: Communities and municipalities analyzed in this chapter. Red: La Barca, Jalisco; Orange: Zacapu, Michoacán; Yellow: Coeneo, Michoacán; Green: Puruándiro, Michoacán; Blue: Valle de Santiago, Guanajuato; Violet: Jesús del Monte, Michoacán. Source: Google My Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1BilfsI_7VCqIqHi7puve4_nk-Dc&usp=sharing.

The History of the Ejido

When the armed conflict to remove Porfirio Díaz began in late 1910, agrarian reform was not a priority of early revolutionary leaders like Francisco Madero, who believed that only moderate political reforms were necessary to fix the social and economic ills of late Porfirian Mexico. However, the agrarian question became central after popular revolutionaries like Emiliano Zapata, whose primary concern was the land concentration that occurred in the decades prior to the Revolution, joined the fight against Díaz. There were tensions between the agrarian and political revolutionaries. But in January 1915, Venustiano Carranza, the leader of one of the principal revolutionary factions, embraced agrarian reform when he issued a law that allowed governors and military commanders loyal to him to begin expropriating and redistributing lands. And when a new constitution was issued in 1917, one of the articles sanctioned the continued redistribution of lands.⁴

⁴ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 55-71, 309-319; and *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 2*, 313, 470. Political revolutionaries like Francisco Madero and Venustiano Carranza mostly agreed with Porfirio Díaz's social and economic policies, but they felt that Díaz had erred by not holding regular elections as he had promised when he first became president in 1876. For the land concentration that motivated Emiliano Zapata and his followers, as well as his initial alliance with Madero, see Paul Hart, *Bitter Harvest: The Social Transformation of Morelos, Mexico, and the Origins of the*

According to historian Emilio Kourí, the land redistribution method sanctioned by the 1917 Constitution and ensuing agrarian laws was the one revolutionary ideologues felt was most sensitive to the country's agrarian history and traditions.⁵ Northern revolutionaries like Pancho Villa had advocated for expropriated estates to be converted into agricultural colonies or divided into smaller holdings that would be privately owned. But central and southern revolutionaries, like the Zapatistas, wanted lands returned directly to the communities that had been affected by expanding estates. And in the Comarca Lagunera and Yucatán, two regions dominated by large, cash crop-producing estates, there were calls to establish collective farms.⁶ Revolutionary leaders like Luis Cabrera ultimately opted to embrace an agrarian reform program more in line with the Zapatista vision. Private estates would be expropriated by the government and converted into ejidos; but the government, not communities, would retain ownership of expropriated lands, and the government would grant rural workers use rights to individual parcels.

Three factors influenced this decision. First, revolutionary leaders believed that rural Mexicans, particularly indigenous ones, were more familiar with communal-style holdings and would thus be wary of an agrarian reform that created privately owned parcels.⁷ Second, it was hoped that this method of land redistribution would bring the Zapatistas, who had broken with the revolutionary government, back into the fold. And third, leftist revolutionary intellectuals were increasingly hostile towards the idea of private property.⁸ This hostility is evident in the Marxist-inspired appeals to class identity used by regional leaders, like Michoacán's Francisco Múgica, who supported the agrarian reform during the 1920s.⁹

Zapatista Revolution, 1840-1910 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); and John Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 37-96.

⁵ Emilio Kourí, "La invención del ejido," 54-61.

⁶ The literature on the agrarian reform and the numerous land redistribution methods that were proposed is voluminous, but here are some key titles. For Morelos and the Zapatistas, see Hart, *Bitter Harvest*; and Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*. For northern Mexico and the Villistas, see Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). For Michoacán, see Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*; and Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). For Guanajuato, see Meyer Cosío, *Tradición y progreso*. For Jalisco, see Craig, *The First Agraristas*. For Yucatán, see Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001); and Gilbert M. Joseph, *Revolution from Without: Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States, 1880-1924* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988). For a comparative analysis of the agrarian reform in Michoacán, the Guanajuato Bajío, the Comarca Lagunera, and Tlaxcala, see Iván Restrepo Fernández and José Sánchez Cortés, *La reforma agraria en cuatro regiones: El Bajío, Michoacán, La Laguna y Tlaxcala* (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1972).

⁷ Revolutionary leaders' interpretation of rural and indigenous Mexicans attitudes towards private property was somewhat misguided. As noted by David Brading and John Tutino, there was a sizable number of small, privately owned *ranchos* in the center-west, particularly the Lerma-Chapala Basin, since at least the eighteenth century. And in his examination of the vanilla-growing zones in nineteenth-century Veracruz, Kourí demonstrates that many indigenous Mexicans embraced the privatization of communally owned lands. For the *ranchero* tradition in the center-west, see Brading, *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío*; John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); and John Tutino "The Revolution in Mexican Independence: Insurgency and the Renegotiation of Property, Production, and Patriarchy in the Bajío, 1800-1855," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78:3 (1998): 367-418. For the indigenous embrace or privatization in Veracruz, see Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁸ Emilio Kourí, "La invención del ejido," 54-61.

⁹ Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, 80-113.

The land redistribution process was structured by a series of Ejido and Land Laws during the 1920s.¹⁰ These statutes were incorporated into a unified Agrarian Code in 1934.¹¹ Would-be ejidatarios had to be rural workers who did not own any lands. Both men and women could receive use rights. Male ejidatarios had to be at least 16-years old if they were unmarried, but they could be any age if they were married. Women could be any age, but they had to have children and be either unmarried or widowed. Communities interested in receiving ejido lands had to file a written request with their respective state government, but requests would only gain official recognition if they were published in the state government's newspaper.

Once a request was published, local-level Agrarian Commissions would conduct a census and survey the lands near the community where the prospective ejidatarios lived. The census determined precisely how many rural workers were eligible to receive use rights, while the survey determined which lands could be expropriated and established the tentative boundaries for ejido parcels. These regulatory measures created many of the problems that prospective and actual ejidatarios experienced. On the one hand, expropriation-eligible lands had to be within seven kilometers of the community that was requesting an ejido. This was probably done to ensure that ejidatarios could easily access their parcels. However, on the other hand, estates within the seven-kilometer radius that had fewer than 150 irrigable hectares or 300 *temporal* (seasonally watered) hectares were classified as "small properties" that were exempt from expropriation. If there were not expropriation-eligible lands within seven kilometers of a deserving community, the only solution was for eligible rural workers to ask the government to create an entirely new population center. In many instances, this was neither easily accomplished nor desirable from the point of view of the community.

After completing the census and land surveys, the Agrarian Commissions would send their reports to the state governors. The governors then had 15 days to approve or deny the ejido request (this period was also the final opportunity private owners had to contest the expropriation of their lands; they also had the chance to lodge objections during the census). If they approved the request, the governors then decided how much land the ejido would receive and how many ejidatarios would receive use rights; if they did nothing within that 15-day window, it was assumed that the request had been denied. However, all decisions, including the tacit denials, had to be reviewed by officials at the federal Agrarian Department. These officials answered directly to the president, and in conjunction with the chief executive they could reduce or expand the size of provisionally approved ejidos, as well as overturn denials. Once the president and the Agrarian Department rendered their decision, it was final and irrevocable. This federal oversight was presumably meant to provide a check on the political power of the governors, although they still wielded considerable political power during this process.

If the president and the Agrarian Department sanctioned the establishment of an ejido, the ejido's leadership council would then allocate use rights to individual parcels via a drawing. Parcels that had access to irrigation water had to measure four hectares, while parcels that only had access to seasonal rainwater had to measure eight hectares. Here, then, was another potential problem: since there was a finite number of parcels that could be allocated, the number of ejidatarios could easily be greater than the number of parcels. If this happened, excluded

¹⁰ Land redistribution laws were issued in 1920, 1922, 1925, 1927, and 1929.

¹¹ A.L. Rodríguez, *Código Agrario de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, April 9, 1934, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LXXXIII, Número 29, April 12, 1934, 597-618. The Agrarian Code was amended in 1940 and 1942, but these amendments did not radically alter the land redistribution process or the statutes that governed ejidos and ejidatarios.

ejidatarios had two possible courses of action: they could be granted use rights in neighboring ejidos with available parcels; or they could file an ejido expansion request, so long as there were still expropriation-eligible lands within the seven-kilometer radius.

Ejidatarios lacked some of the freedoms of private holders. They were barred from subdividing their parcels or renting them out, and they could not transfer their use rights. If an ejidatario died, only one individual – the widow, the oldest living child eligible to receive use rights, or, if the ejidatario was unmarried or childless, the oldest living relative eligible to receive use rights – could inherit their use rights. Ejidatarios could receive loans, but they had to be issued by the state-run National Agrarian Credit Bank or the National Ejido Credit Bank, and parcels could not be used as collateral.¹²

In sum, the 1934 Agrarian Code and the laws that preceded it provided a structure, however flawed, to what was a massive land redistribution effort: between the promulgation of the 1915 Agrarian Law and the end of Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency in 1940, 189,974 ejidatarios in 1,826 Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidos were granted use rights to 1.67 million hectares.¹³ But as we have seen, these structures had a number of unintended consequences. Most notably, the requirement that ejido lands be within seven kilometers of the community that requested them and the limits placed on the size of parcels increased the likelihood that ejidatarios would receive use rights to poor-quality lands or be left entirely out of the ejido.

The creation of a class of expropriation-exempt small properties also proved vexing for prospective Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidatarios. As noted in Chapter Four, many owners of large haciendas successfully claimed to have sold off enough of their holdings so that they could not be expropriated. However, there were also tens of thousands of small- to medium-sized haciendas and ranchos in the region that existed independent of any landowners' scheming. Per the 1930 Agrarian Census, there were at least 54,901 private holdings – 97.74 percent of all private agricultural properties – that measured 500 hectares or less in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. This was a high proportion of expropriation-exempt properties. For example, in the Tierra Caliente and Sierra de Coalcomán municipalities of southwestern Michoacán, 89.10 percent of private agricultural properties measured 500 hectares or less; and in the coastal plains of southwestern Jalisco, only 68.76 percent of private agricultural properties measured 500 hectares or less.¹⁴

¹² Lázaro Cárdenas, *Ley de Crédito Agrícola que reforma la de 24 de enero de 1934*, December 19, 1935, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCIII, Número 33, December 20, 1935, 830-832. The National Ejido Bank had not been established when the 1934 Agrarian Code was issued.

¹³ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. The total amount of lands that were expropriated and redistributed in the Lerma-Chapala Basin between 1915 and 1940 was 1,675,121 hectares. Most of these lands – 1,465,941 hectares – were distributed when the 1,826 ejidos were first established; 168,137 ejidatarios received use rights in these initial grants. The remaining lands were expropriated and redistributed during 379 ejido expansions; 21,837 ejidatarios received use rights during these expansions. The bulk of this redistribution process occurred during Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency.

¹⁴ Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Guanajuato*, 12-14, 18-21, 112-113; Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Jalisco*, 12-16, 20-25, 146-147; and Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Michoacán*, 12-14, 20-23, 142-143. The Agrarian Census counted 56,172 private properties, including holdings worked by renters and sharecroppers, and 320 ejidos in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Holdings were categorized in the following size ranges: 1 to 5 hectares; 6 to 10 hectares; 11 to 50 hectares; 51 to 100 hectares; 101 to 200 hectares; 201 to 500 hectares; 501 to 1,000 hectares; 1,001 to 5,000 hectares; 5,001 to 10,000 hectares; and greater than 10,000 hectares. As a result, I cannot determine how many private holdings measured 300 hectares or less. For each municipality, the Census lists how many properties fell within each category. However, ejidos and private properties were counted together in these municipal tallies, and it does not state how many holdings in a given category were ejidos.

Beyond these factors, ejidatarios also had limited opportunities to acquire credit, and because they did not own them outright, there was little they could do with their parcels besides planting them with crops. Furthermore, the Agrarian Code did not prescribe any sanctions for federal and state officials that failed to perform their agrarian reform-related responsibilities, or performed them in ways that reflected political considerations more than need or equity. This meant that at best the pace of land redistribution could slow to a crawl if these officials did not prioritize it, and at worst, that land redistribution could be a corrupt process. This is exactly what occurred during the years of the Bracero Program: from 1940 to 1964, only 204,980 hectares were redistributed among 14,792 ejidatarios in 471 newly-created or expanded Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidos.¹⁵ Faced with these obstacles, actual and prospective ejidatarios became prospective braceros.

Insufficient and Poor-Quality Lands, Official Credit, and Bracero Emigration

Almost as soon as the Bracero Program began, rural workers who were eligible to join ejidos but had been excluded from them expressed an interest in migrating. This is what occurred in Isaac Arriaga (formerly Santa Ana Mancera), an ejido in the Michoacán municipality of Puruándiro. In February 1945, Heliodoro Martínez Rangel, the comisariado ejidal (ejido president), wrote to Governor José María Mendoza Pardo. Martínez Rangel informed the governor that there were “many men in the community without an ejido parcel [who] thus find themselves in a most dreadful economic situation.” The ejido official then asked that these landless men be given bracero cards so they could “find work in the United States and be able to provide for their families.” Martínez Rangel did not ask for a specific number of bracero cards, but he did tell the governor that there were approximately 300 landless rural workers in Isaac Arriaga; the message implied that all of them were interested in migrating to the United States.¹⁶

Isaac Arriaga rural workers filed their ejido request in February 1930. In September 1932, the Agrarian Commission determined that 465 Isaac Arriaga residents were eligible to become ejidatarios, and they forwarded their report to the state government. But the state government did not render a decision within the allotted time window, and the unresolved request was then forwarded to the federal Agrarian Department. In July 1934, President

The Census does calculate what percentage of each size category was ejidos, but it does this for regions, not individual municipalities. For example, ejidos in Southwestern Guanajuato – the municipalities of Abasolo, Cuerámaro, Huanímaro, Pénjamo, and Pueblo Nuevo – represented 44.44 percent of holdings in the 201 to 500 hectare range. The Census listed 18 ejidos in the region, so eight ejidos measured between 201 and 500 hectares. Many of the regions are made up entirely of Lerma-Chapala Basin municipalities. However, the Census considers the municipalities of the Michoacán Bajío to be part of the same region as the Pátzcuaro Basin and the eastern Sierra Purépecha. As a result, I was unable to determine the size category of nine of the Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidos measured by the Census. Because of this, I can only determine a range of the number of private properties. There were between 54,901 and 54,903 private properties that measured 500 hectares or less, and between 1,269 and 1,271 properties that measured 501 hectares or more. In Southwestern Michoacán – the municipalities of Aguililla, Apatzingán, Aquila, Arteaga, Buenavista, Coalcomán, Tepalcatepec, and Villa Victoria (contemporary Chinicuila) – 1,251 out of 1,404 private properties measured 500 hectares or less. In Southwestern Jalisco – the municipalities of Cihuatlán, Puerto Vallarta, Purificación, and Tomatlán – 295 out of 429 private properties measured 500 hectares or less.

¹⁵ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. During this period, 8,092 ejidatarios received use rights to 118,629 hectares in 242 newly created ejidos. The remaining hectares were redistributed in 229 ejido expansions; 6,700 ejidatarios received use rights in these expansions.

¹⁶ Heliodoro Martínez Rangel to C. Gobernador del Estado, February 16, 1945, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 30/31.

Abelardo Rodríguez sanctioned the establishment of an ejido in Isaac Arriaga, and he granted 321 ejidatarios use rights to 2,290 hectares. However, only 253 of the new ejidatarios lived in Isaac Arriaga. The other 68 ejidatarios were rural workers from neighboring ejidos who did not have use rights to parcels in their home communities.¹⁷

Seven months after the ejido was established, an expansion request was sent to the state government. The Agrarian Commission found that there were 195 prospective ejidatarios in Isaac Arriaga, although, as occurred with the original ejido request, the state government did not render a decision. After reviewing the request, the federal Agrarian Department reduced the number of use right-eligible workers to 194; it also determined that because of the establishment of other ejidos, only 313.60 hectares within seven kilometers of Isaac Arriaga could be allocated to that community. In April 1936, President Lázaro Cárdenas approved the expansion of the ejido. Use rights to all 313.60 hectares were distributed, but because of the parcel sizes mandated by the Agrarian Code, there was only enough land for 59 new parcels. The 135 prospective ejidatarios who were excluded from the expansion were told they could request lands in a new population center.¹⁸ A request for a new population center was filed in February 1938, and this was followed up by a request for a second ejido expansion in March 1938.¹⁹ But I found no record of the new population center request ever having been resolved, and the second expansion request was denied in April 1940 because there were no more expropriation-eligible lands within seven kilometers of the community.²⁰

Although Heliodoro Martínez Rangel did not explicitly state that the 135 would-be ejidatarios were among those interested in migrating as braceros in early 1945, the internal structures of the agrarian reform clearly contributed to landlessness problem he cited. On two occasions, the very process that was supposed to benefit Isaac Arriaga ejidatarios had actually worked against them. First, local ejidatarios had been denied use rights to parcels because the government had granted them to ejidatarios from neighboring communities. And second, over 100 eligible rural workers were left out of the ejido because there was a finite amount of land available within the prescribed seven-kilometer radius. Later land requests were either ignored or outright denied. These frustrations may not have been mentioned in Martínez Rangel's bracero card request, but it is impossible to imagine that they did not influence the desire to emigrate from Isaac Arriaga.

These frustrations were likely increased because of the final step of the agrarian reform process: the random drawings organized by ejido leadership councils. In instances where the number of ejidatarios was greater than the number of parcels, these drawings determined who

¹⁷ A.L. Rodríguez, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Santa Ana Mancera, Estado de Michoacán, July 30, 1934, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LXXXVI, Número 41, October 29, 1934, 1,226-1,228. The community's name was changed to Isaac Arriaga after the initial *ejido* grant. The non-resident ejidatarios were from Las Rosas (4), San José Huipana (22), and Soledad de Santa Ana (42).

¹⁸ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de ampliación de tierras al poblado Isaac Arriaga, Estado de Michoacán, April 1, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVI, Número 3, Sección Primera, 5-6.

¹⁹ Matías Figueroa and others, Solicitud presentada por vecinos del poblado Isaac Arriaga, Mich., para la creación de un centro de población agrícola, February 27, 1938, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CVII, Número 26, March 30, 1938, 8. The petitioners claimed that local landowners had used the *fraccionamiento* strategy I described in Chapter Four to skirt the agrarian reform. However, I found no other reference to this strategy being employed in this particular instance.

²⁰ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de segunda ampliación de ejidos al poblado Isaac Arriaga, Estado de Michoacán, April 24, 1940, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CXXI, Número 11, July 12, 1940, 8-9.

did and did not receive use rights. If the drawings were conducted in an unbiased manner, then the ultimate fate of ejidatarios' status within their communities was decided by chance. But it is also possible to imagine that the drawing results could be corrupted by monetary influence or intra-community political considerations. There is no evidence that the parcel drawing was corrupted in Isaac Arriaga. But that did not change the fact that, since there were no longer large private estates where local rural workers could find employment, their local economic options were limited.

Even if the Isaac Arriaga rural workers who had been excluded from the ejido had received use rights to a parcel, there was no guarantee that they would have received use rights to high-quality parcels. The Agrarian Code made it so that ejidatarios had to settle for whatever lands were within seven kilometers of their community, regardless of their quality. As a result, numerous Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidatarios worked temporal parcels that could only be watered during the May to October rainy season. This increased the likelihood of crop losses in years when rainfall was insufficient or excessive.

And when crop losses occurred, Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers attempted to acquire bracero cards. The pitfalls of temporal lands became evident during the early years of the Bracero Program, which coincided with a severe drought in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. In December 1944, the ejidatarios of Las Raíces, in the Guanajuato municipality of Valle de Santiago, wrote to the governor to request bracero cards. The lack of rains and their "absolute reliance" on temporal lands had led to the "total loss of our maize and bean harvest." The loss of the harvest meant that the ejidatarios' families were on the brink of starvation, and their cattle were also dying because they no longer had grass to feed on. The ejidatarios feared that their families would "undoubtedly perish," and so they asked the governor to help them by sanctioning their departure to the United States. The prospective braceros knew that ejidatarios were not allowed to leave the country as braceros. But they hoped that the governor would overlook the restriction if he put himself in their shoes and imagined himself "tearfully telling children that there was no food to eat."²¹ Las Raíces's ejidatarios were not exaggerating their reliance on temporal lands. The community had received use rights to 576 hectares in the spring of 1936. However, because the lands within seven kilometers were mostly temporal, all 428 cultivable hectares in the ejido were temporal; the remaining 148 hectares were cattle grazing lands.²²

Las Raíces was not the only Valle de Santiago ejido where drought-related crop losses were exacerbated by the reliance on temporal lands. Bracero card requests sent from seven other Valle de Santiago ejidos – Charco de Parangueo, El Salitre, Las Jicamas, Presa de San Andrés, San Antonio de Pantoja, Sanabria, and Santa Catarina – in 1944 and 1945 cited the drought as the reason for wanting to migrate.²³ As in Las Raíces, all the cultivable lands in six of these

²¹ Multiple petitioners to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, December 4, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 151, fojas sin número.

²² Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado Las Raíces, Estado de Guanajuato, April 29, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVI, Número 12, Sección Segunda, May 16, 1936, 12-13.

²³ Multiple petitioners to C. Lic. D. Ernesto Hidalgo, December 10, 1944, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19, año 1944, expediente 162, foja sin número; José Negrete Ahumada to C. Gobernador, February 14, 1945; Ramón Paredes to C. Gobernador, February 16, 1945; J. Carmen Rodríguez to C. Gobernador, February 4, 1945; Crissóforo Lesso to C. Gobernador, February 19, 1945; Ángel Ramírez to C. Gobernador, February 19, 1945; Miguel García to C. Gobernador, February 19, 1945; AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (40), año 1945, expediente 1, fojas sin número.

ejidos were temporal.²⁴ Only Santa Catarina had parcels with access to irrigation water. But this was a small ejido – 138.91 hectares – and only 43.80 hectares, or one-third, were irrigable.²⁵

The 1944-1945 drought was so severe that even ejidatarios with access to irrigated lands expressed an interest in migrating as braceros, though their desire to become braceros was also influenced by an additional institutional hurdle: the National Ejido Bank. In March 1945, the leadership council of Laredo, in the Michoacán municipality of Coeneo, asked the state government for 30 bracero cards. The petitioners noted that despite the good quality of their parcels – 360 of the ejido’s 694 hectares were irrigable, and the ejidatarios also had access to 70 hectares of water storage units and a modest canal system – they had lost half of their most recent maize crop.²⁶ The ejidatarios wanted to improve their irrigation infrastructure so they could prevent future crop losses. But when they approached the National Ejido Bank branch in Zacapu to request a loan, bank officials informed them that they needed to provide cash collateral in order to secure credit. Because of the drought-related crop losses, Laredo’s ejidatarios could not gather the necessary funds, and the Agrarian Code barred them from acquiring private credit. However, if their bracero card request was approved, those that left Laredo pledged to contribute US\$100 each to the collateral fund. The prospective braceros hoped that the state government would sanction their departure, since the completion of their irrigation projects “would greatly benefit the community and the nation.”²⁷

Laredo ejidatarios’ ultimate goal was a government-sanctioned loan, but official credit could be a double-edged sword. In March 1945, the leadership council of the Valle de Santiago ejido of Rancho Nuevo de San Andrés (formerly Mogotes) requested 65 bracero cards. Like their neighbors in Las Raíces, the Rancho Nuevo ejidatarios had suffered crop losses. The prospective braceros did not cite the drought, but the lack of rains likely exacerbated the crop losses; 976 of the ejido’s 1,338 hectares were temporal.²⁸ The would-be migrants also had an additional burden to bear: they were indebted to the National Ejido Bank. To settle their debts

²⁴ Emilio Portes Gil, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado de Charco de Parangueo, Estado de Guanajuato, September 5, 1929, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LVII, Número 49, Sección Primera, December 31, 1929, 5-10; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Presa de San Andrés, Estado de Guanajuato, April 29, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVI, Número 14, May 19, 1936, 9-11; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado El Salitre, Estado de Guanajuato, April 29, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVI, Número 17, June 1, 1936, 4-6; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Sanabria, Estado de Guanajuato, August 4, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVIII, Número 44, Sección Tercera, October 23, 1936, 1-3; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Las Jicamas, Estado de Guanajuato, August 4, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo Tomo XCVIII, Número 45, Sección Tercera, October 24, 1936, 15-16; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado San Antonio de Pantoja, September 16, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVIII, Número 43, Sección Tercera, October 22, 1936, 6-7.

²⁵ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Santa Catarina, Estado de Guanajuato, September 30, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCIX, Número 35, Sección Segunda, December 23, 1936, 5-7.

²⁶ A.L. Rodríguez, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Laredo, Estado de Michoacán, September 3, 1934, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LXXXVI, Número 43, Sección Segunda, October 31, 1934, 1,283-1,285. The irrigation canal infrastructure measured 3.30 hectares. The ejido also had 24 hectares of temporal lands and 237 hectares of cattle grazing lands.

²⁷ Gregorio Morales and others to Ciudadano Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, March 1, 1945, AGHPM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 73/74.

²⁸ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Mogotes o Rancho Nuevo de San Andrés, Estado de Guanajuato, April 29, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCVI, Número 20, Sección Primera, June 4, 1936, 7-9. The remaining lands in the ejido were for cattle grazing.

with the bank, the ejidatarios had sold their maize and bean reserves. The sale of their stores coupled with the loss of their most recent crop had left the community without any food.²⁹ Faced with starvation, Rancho Nuevo's ejidatarios saw the Bracero Program as the means to ameliorate the effects of both their crop losses and their dealings with the National Ejido Bank.

The Slowing of the Agrarian Reform, the Population Boom, and Bracero Emigration

The prospective braceros discussed above lived in ejidos that were established prior to the Bracero Program. But as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the federal and state governments of the bracero era did not prioritize the agrarian reform as their predecessors had done, and as a result the pace of land redistribution slowed dramatically after World War II. Dámaso Cárdenas, who governed Michoacán from 1950 to 1956, summarized this new attitude when he declared that distributing lands would not be a principal concern of his administration, and that his government would instead focus on delimiting the boundaries of existing ejidos and urban development.³⁰ It was not especially difficult for federal and state officials to slow the pace of land redistribution. All they had to do was ignore petitions for new and expanded ejidos.

Blocked from access to new lands, Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers began asking for bracero cards instead. For example, in April 1953, over 100 landless rural workers from eight ejidos in the Jalisco municipality of La Barca – San Antonio, Salamea, San Ramón, La Paz de Ordaz, El Gobernador, Loreto Occidental, El Portezeulo, and San Francisco – wrote to President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to request bracero cards. For years the prospective braceros had been living in “frightful misery because of the lack of work and lands to sow.” They occasionally found work on small private estates that had not been expropriated, but their wages were so low that their families “barely had enough food for one daily meal, and our children sometimes go to school without having had anything to eat.” The would-be migrants were landless because they had all been too young to receive use rights when ejidos were established in their communities, and lands were no longer being redistributed now that they had come of age. The petitioners were still interested in acquiring lands, but if none were available they wanted to migrate as braceros instead.³¹ The group renewed its request for bracero cards two months later, although in this request they also stated they were also willing to move to vacant lands in the northwestern state of Sinaloa if their request for bracero cards was denied.³²

The prospective La Barca braceros' hopes for acquiring lands in their home communities were indeed dim. All the ejidos they lived in had been granted their lands during the 1930s.³³

²⁹ José Rentería and others to C. Gobernador, February 18, 1945, AGGEG, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Primer Departamento, serie 1.19 (40), año 1945, expediente 1, foja sin número.

³⁰ Álvaro Ochoa Serrano and Gerardo Sánchez Díaz, *Michoacán: Historia breve*, 2nd edition (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica; El Colegio de México; Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas, 2011), 209. Dámaso Cárdenas was former president Lázaro Cárdenas's younger brother.

³¹ J.C. Chávez and others to C. D. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, April 16, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1199, fojas sin número.

³² J.C. Chávez to C. Presidente de la República, June 26, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1199, foja sin número.

³³ A.L. Rodríguez, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado San Antonio, Estado de Jalisco, November 19, 1934, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LXXXVIII, Número 48, February 26, 1935 4-5; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado El Gobernador, Estado de Jalisco, July 2, 1935, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCI, Número 37, August 12, 1935, 616-618; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el dotación de tierras al poblado San Ramón, Estado de Jalisco, August 13, 1935, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCII, Número 16, September 20, 1935, 277-279; Lázaro

But between the establishment of Loreto Occidental's ejido in April 1938 and the would-be migrants' 1953 requests, their communities had only received additional lands through two ejido expansions: first in May 1938, when La Paz de Ordaz received an additional 264 hectares; and then again in December 1949, when El Gobernador's ejido was expanded by 22 hectares.³⁴ El Gobernador's expansion request took four years to be resolved, which is lightning-paced compared to the time it took to resolve expansion requests made by neighboring communities. Salamea's ejidatarios requested an expansion in March 1937, but the federal government did not render a final decision until November 1949, when it denied the expansion request.³⁵ Ejidatarios in San Antonio filed their own expansion request in December 1948. Their request was approved, but not until October 1964, during the final year of the Bracero Program.³⁶ Late as it was, San Antonio's expansion marked the first time one of the eight La Barca ejidos discussed here had received lands since El Gobernador's 1949 expansion. This glacial pace and the landlessness that resulted from it are what ultimately prompted La Barca rural workers to want to migrate as braceros.

A population boom further exacerbated the agrarian pressures caused by the slowing of the agrarian reform. According to census data, the Lerma-Chapala Basin's total population grew from 2,006,210 in 1940 to 3,157,198 in 1960. During that same period, the male population aged 20 to 44 – that is, men eligible to migrate via the Bracero Program and old enough to become ejidatarios – increased from 312,911 to 437,616.³⁷ But this growing population of working-aged men had little hope of acquiring use rights in Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidos, and so they sought to migrate to the United States.

Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado La Paz de Ordaz, Estado de Jalisco, November 4, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCIX, Número 40, Sección Primera, December 29, 1936, 6-8; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado Salamea, Estado de Jalisco, November 4, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XCIX, Número 41, Sección Segunda, December 30, 1936, 31-32; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de ejidos al poblado San Francisco y anexas, Estado de Jalisco, November 4, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo C, Número 4, January 6, 1937, 11-13; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado El Portezuelo, Estado de Jalisco, November 13, 1936, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo C, Número 24, Sección Segunda, January 29, 1937, 9-12; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras al poblado Loreto Occidente, Estado de Jalisco, April 20, 1938, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CVIII, Número 25, June 8, 1938, 6-7.

³⁴ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de ampliación de ejidos al poblado de La Paz de Ordaz, Estado de Jalisco, May 4, 1938, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CVIII, Número 28, Sección Segunda, 15-16; Miguel Alemán, Resolución sobre tercera ampliación de ejido al poblado El Gobernador, en La Barca, Jal., December 21, 1949, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CLXXIX, Número 2, Sección Segunda, March 2, 1950, 15-16.

³⁵ Miguel Alemán, Resolución sobre ampliación de ejido al poblado Salamea an la Barca, Jal., November 9, 1949, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CLXXVIII, Número 29, Sección Segunda, February 3, 1950, 11-12.

³⁶ Adolfo López Mateos, Resolución sobre segunda ampliación de ejido al poblado de San Antonio, en La Barca, Jal., October 20, 1964, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCLXVIII, Número 15, January 19, 1965, 15-16.

³⁷ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Guanajuato*, 13-15, 49-51, 85-87; *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Jalisco*, 13-15, 47-49, 77-79, 106-108, 133-135, 161-163; *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán*, 13-15, 46-48, 73-75, 102-104, 130-132, 160-161; *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Guanajuato*, 132-143; *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Jalisco*, 238-273; *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Michoacán*, 185-216.

The combination of demographic expansion and a slowed agrarian reform was particularly severe in the Michoacán municipality of Zacapu. The number of men aged 20 to 44 living in the municipality more than doubled between 1940 and 1960, from 2,549 to 5,746 (the municipality's total population increased at the same rate during this period, from 16,501 to 38,812).³⁸ However, this growing population could no longer count on access to ejido lands. Eighteen ejidos had been established in Zacapu prior to the Bracero Program, although the last time lands were redistributed in the municipality before the program was in 1938, when Tarejero was granted an additional 60 hectares.³⁹ And the only lands distributed in the jurisdiction during the program were the 282 hectares granted to Las Canoas in 1950.⁴⁰ Because of this and the coinciding population boom, half of the bracero card requests Zacapu rural workers sent to Michoacán's government during the final three years of the Bracero Program cited large families, landlessness, or some combination of the two as the reason they wanted to migrate.⁴¹

For example, in February 1964, Mateo Ambrís Constantino, the leader of the municipal seat's ejido, asked Governor Agustín Arriaga Rivera for bracero cards for 42 "sons of militant ejidatarios." This language was likely meant to highlight the ejidatarios' longstanding allegiance to the government and the agrarian reform. Three hundred seventy-one Zacapu rural workers were granted use rights when the ejido was established in 1925, and 38 became ejidatarios when the ejido was expanded 10 years later.⁴² However, the ejido had not received lands since the expansion, and the community's male population more than tripled – from 2,946 to 10,673 – between 1940 and 1960.⁴³ As a result, the young prospective braceros could "no longer survive off of the products of their parents' parcels, especially since many of them now have families of their own." Rather than continue to burden their "poor parents" – whose options for helping their sons were limited, since they were barred from transferring their use rights or subdividing their parcels – the young rural workers wanted to migrate. Ambrís Constantino hoped that the

³⁸ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán*, 130-132; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Michoacán*, 199, 215.

³⁹ Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de segunda ampliación de ejidos al poblado Tarejero, Estado de Michoacán, March 16, 1938, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CVII, Número 32, 4-6.

⁴⁰ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. The federal government rendered its final decision on February 22, 1950. The decision was published in the March 21, 1950 edition of the *Diario Oficial de la Federación*. Unfortunately, that edition of the newspaper is not available in any archive or in the newspaper's electronic collection, and I have been unable to locate the decision in any other collection.

⁴¹ Zacapu rural workers sent 22 written bracero card requests to Michoacán officials between 1962 and 1964. Requests are in AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expedientes 9 and 10; caja 4, expedientes 11, 12, 13, and 15; caja 5, expedientes 16 and 18; and caja 6, expedientes 20 and 22.

⁴² P. Elías Calles, Resolución en el expediente de restitución de tierras promovida por vecinos de la Villa de Zacapu de Mier, Estado de Michoacán, October 8, 1925, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XXXII, Número 39, October 17, 1925, 674-682; Lázaro Cárdenas, Resolución en el expediente de ampliación automática de ejidos al poblado Zacapu de Mier, Estado de Michoacán, February 6, 1935, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo LXXXIX, Número 7, March 8, 1935, 79-80. Zacapu's ejido measured 1,600 hectares when it was established; the expansion granted the ejido an additional 114 hectares.

⁴³ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán*, 208; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Michoacán*, 103.

governor would look favorably on their request, especially since the would-be migrants had all “distinguished themselves as hard workers.”⁴⁴

Mateo Ambrís Constantino’s request for bracero cards may have been especially frustrating because Zacapu was one of the cradles of the agrarian reform in Michoacán. The municipality had been the home of Primo Tapia, a Naranja agrarista who promoted the agrarian reform throughout the area during the 1920s and who in 1923 was elected the first secretary general of the League of Agrarian Communities. Tapia was assassinated in 1926, but not before he helped establish ejidos in Naranja, Tarejero, Tiríndaro, and the municipal seat. The 42 prospective braceros that wished to migrate in 1964 may not have been able to join the ejido that Tapia helped create, but they did indirectly benefit from another of his legacies: before Tapia became the principal agrarista leader in Zacapu, he spent several years in the United States, thus fostering the migrant social networks that later braceros would tap into.⁴⁵

Institutional Shortcomings and Material Improvements

During the final years of the Bracero Program, many Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers stated that they were interested in migrating because they wanted to invest their U.S. earnings in material improvement projects, such as the introduction of electricity to rural communities, the paving of roads, and the construction of potable water systems. This could be an indication that one of the federal government’s Bracero Program-related goals I discussed in Chapter One had been achieved: bracero monies were being used to boost rural development. But I argue that it was not altruism or a disinterested desire to modernize the countryside that prompted prospective braceros to cite material improvement projects in their bracero card requests. Rather, they were motivated by the federal government’s expectation that rural Mexicans contribute monetarily to these projects, and by the fact that the government had botched some of these projects. The cases I discuss below were not directly linked to the administration of the agrarian reform. However, the official guidelines that structured these projects had the unintended consequence of encouraging bracero migration, much like the agrarian reform did.

In May 1964, the comisariado ejidal and encargado del orden (security chief) of San Nicolás, in the Michoacán municipality of Puruándiro, wrote to Governor Agustín Arriaga Rivera. The officials thanked the governor for recently attending the inauguration of the community’s new electricity system. But they also asked the governor for bracero cards that would go to community members who “lacked the means to pay for their share of the electrification project.”⁴⁶ Less than one week later, María Pimentel, the director of San Nicolás’s School Breakfast Program, sent her own bracero card request to the governor. Pimentel was writing on behalf of poor family members who had “a tremendous need to emigrate.” This tremendous need was linked to the recent electrification of the community. Pimentel expressed her happiness with the project and she looked forward to the benefits electric power would provide to San Nicolás. But she also noted that her relatives and others still owed a significant portion of the costs associated with the project, and that they also needed to gather funds to finish

⁴⁴ Mateo Ambrís Constantino to C. Gobernador del Estado, February 27, 1964, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, fojas 129-130.

⁴⁵ Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village*, 58-130.

⁴⁶ Comisariado Ejidal and Encargado del Orden to Sr. Lic. Agustín Arriaga Rivera, May 10, 1964, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 5, expediente 16, foja 147.

the construction of a new schoolhouse (I touched upon rural Mexicans needing to contribute to schoolhouse construction costs in Chapter Four).⁴⁷

Michoacán's government had approved the introduction of electricity to San Nicolás in December 1962. The total cost of the project was determined to be \$230,800 pesos. The Federal Electricity Commission (CFE by its Spanish initials) would provide half of this amount. The other half had to be provided by state government and San Nicolás's residents. This meant that the community members had to contribute \$57,700 pesos. And they had to do so directly, since CFE officials made no mention of Puruándiro's municipal government having to pay any of the costs associated with the project.⁴⁸

Material improvement projects figured differently in a 1963 case from Zacapu. In April of that year, Bartolo Gallo Guiza, the comisariado ejidal of Zacapu, wrote to the state government on behalf of 76 prospective braceros, all of whom were the sons of local ejidatarios. The ejido's 1962 harvest had been severely impacted by hailstorms and heavy winds. The would-be migrants had hoped to improve their parents' socioeconomic situation by working on the Zacapu-Abasolo road, which was then being built and paved, as well as on maintenance that was being performed on the drainage systems that emptied local lakes and marshes. But the young men's "hopes were dashed" when they learned that the government would be using machinery to pave the new road and clean the drainage system. Since they would not be able to work on the projects, despite their wishes, they hoped the state government would sanction their departure as soon as they received bracero cards to distribute.⁴⁹

In other Lerma-Chapala Basin communities, rural workers wanted to leave because the government had botched material improvement projects. In April 1960, Francisco Saavedra Correa, a resident of the Coeneo, Michoacán ejido of Comanja, requested 50 bracero cards from the state government. The community had a great need to "refurbish our incomplete potable water system," which had been partially installed a few years earlier.⁵⁰ Not only was the system incomplete, even the parts of the system that were finished regularly broke down because the government had used cement pipes that could not withstand high water pressures. Saavedra Correa stated that each of the prospective braceros had promised to purchase steel piping for a new system that would end the scarcity "of the precious liquid that we so greatly desire."⁵¹ Comanja residents made two more bracero card requests – one in July 1963, the other in May 1964 – that cited the need to renovate the potable water system by replacing the concrete pipes with steel ones.⁵²

⁴⁷ María Pimentel to Sr. Agustín Arriaga Rivera, May 15, 1964, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 5, expediente 19, foja 58.

⁴⁸ Ing. Emilio Díaz Carreón to C. Comisariado Ejidal de San Nicolás, December 19, 1962, AGHPEM, serie Puruándiro, caja 1, expediente 11, foja sin número.

⁴⁹ Bartolo Gallo Guiza to Ciudadano Lic. Don Agustín Arriaga Rivera, April 26, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 11, foja 62.

⁵⁰ Manuel Anaya, Tarifa para el cobro del servicio de agua potable que suministra el sistema de Comanja, Mich., September 21, 1956, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCXVIII, Número 38, October 16, 1958, 11.

⁵¹ Francisco Saavedra Correa to C. Oficial Mayor de Gobierno, April 29, 1960, AGHPEM, serie Coeneo, caja 1, expediente 4, foja 17.

⁵² Agustín Razo Fernández to Ciudadano Profesor Leodegario López R., July 13, 1963, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 13, foja 98; Agapito Calixto Chávez to C. Lic. Agustín Arriaga Rivera, May 25, 1964, AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 5, expediente 19, foja 77.

There is a possibility that these prospective Comanja braceros were using the potable water system as a smokescreen to conceal what was truly motivating them to migrate. As discussed in Chapter Four, Comanja was the site of an internecine conflict between conservative Catholics and government supporters, and rural workers whose access to lands was blocked by these clashes sought to migrate as braceros. Perhaps the prospective braceros who cited the faulty potable water system were hiding their involvement in the conflict so the government would look more favorably on their request. But I believe that these would-be migrants genuinely wanted to repair Comanja's water system, especially since they were not the only Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers who invoked incomplete water systems in their bracero card requests. For example, in February 1964, Ramón Vargas Mondragón of Las Canoas, in the Michoacán municipality of Zacapu, requested 20 bracero cards because the construction of the local potable water system had not been completed.⁵³ Thus, although Comanja's water system failed for reasons unrelated to the community's conflict, the effect was the same: both prompted local rural workers to want to migrate to the United States.

Conclusion

This chapter examined Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers who were interested in migrating as braceros because of structural flaws in the agrarian reform program. The requirements that proved to be the most vexing were the ones that stipulated that ejido lands had to be within seven kilometers of the community that requested them, and that exempted small private estates from expropriation. If there were no expropriation-eligible lands within seven kilometers of an ejido, then prospective ejidatarios could be deprived of their use rights; this is what happened in communities like Isaac Arriaga, Michoacán. The seven-kilometer statute also meant that ejidatarios had to settle for whatever lands were within that radius, no their quality; this in turn led to ejidatarios in Las Raíces, Guanajuato and other communities to rely almost exclusively on temporal lands that were susceptible to weather-related crop losses.

The central role played by the state in the land redistribution process also proved to be an unexpected hindrance. Ejidatarios could only secure loans from government-supported institutions like the National Ejido Credit Bank, which meant that options for financial assistance during difficult times were limited. And since the pace of the agrarian reform was at the discretion of federal and state officials, land redistribution could languish if the government did not prioritize it. This is what occurred during the years of the Bracero Program, and when rural workers in municipalities like La Barca, Jalisco and Zacapu, Michoacán could no longer hope to secure use rights in an ejido, they set their sights on the United States.

It is ironic that the policies that theoretically benefitted rural workers had the same effect as the conservative Catholic backlash against them. But it is clear that institutional structures could harm the socioeconomic standing of Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers as much as community-level conflicts did. The prospective braceros discussed above may not have been embroiled in the types of clashes I described in Chapter Four, but their socioeconomic standing suffered just the same. And just like their neighbors who had opposed the agrarian reform or run afoul of local Catholics, Lerma-Chapala Basin ejidatarios frustrated with the internal mechanics of the agrarian reform saw the Bracero Program as a mean to remedy their socioeconomic maladies.

⁵³ Ramón Vargas Mondragón to C. Lic. José L. Flores, February 21, 1964, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 20, foja 169.

The past two chapters have analyzed prospective braceros in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, the area of the center-west where demand for bracero cards was highest. The next chapter will focus on prospective braceros from the Sierra Purépecha, an area of Michoacán immediately south of the Lerma-Chapala Basin. This was one of the first regions to send braceros to the United States during the early 1940s. But the same political factors that influenced demand for bracero cards in the Lerma-Chapala Basin were not present in the Sierra Purépecha. As a result, demand for bracero cards in this region waned during the 1950s and 1960s, despite its early exposure to the Bracero Program and its proximity to the Lerma-Chapala Basin.

Chapter Six The Bracero Program in the Sierra Purépecha

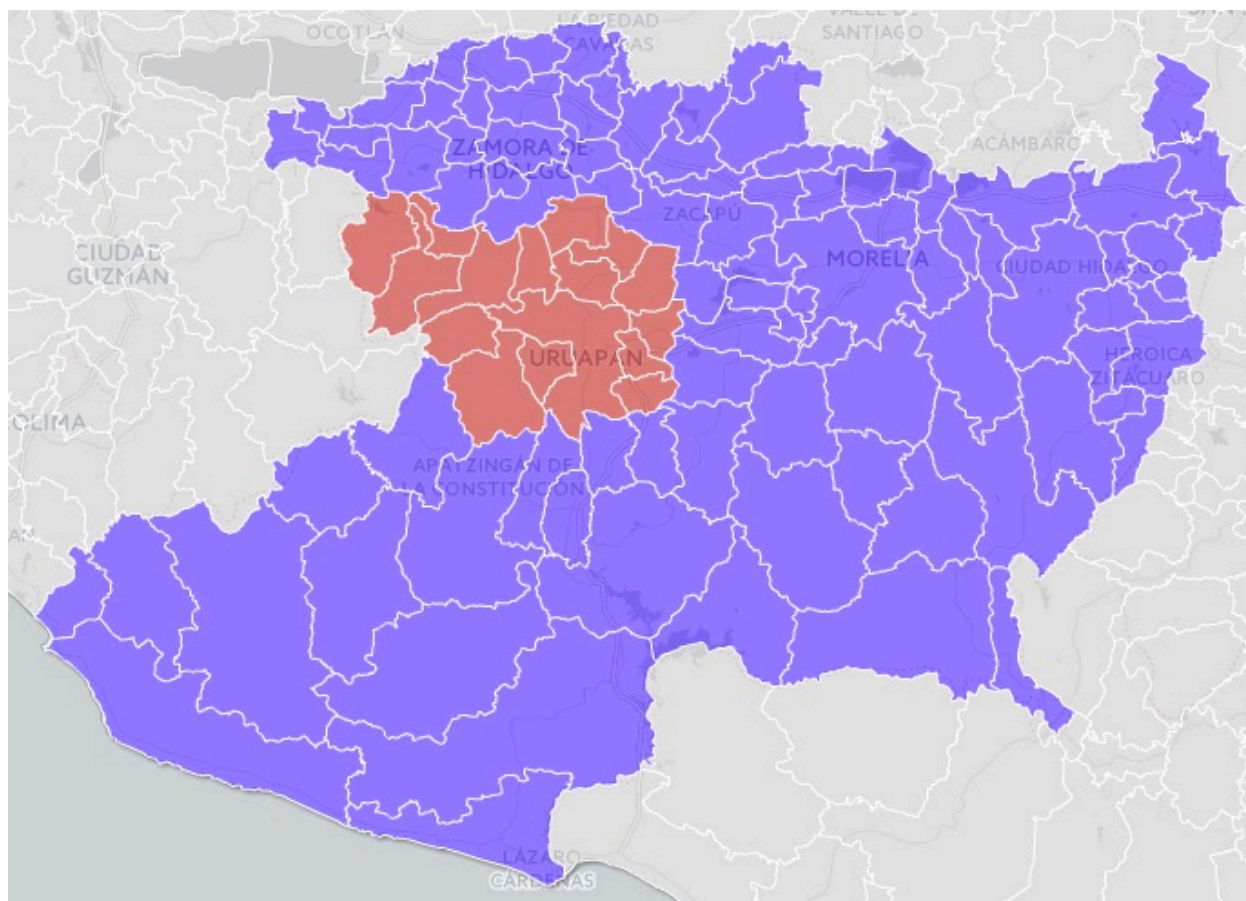
On June 15, 1944, Nicolás Blanco, the municipal president of Peribán, in Michoacán's Sierra Purépecha, convened an extraordinary session of the municipal government. Blanco and his fellow officials had an urgent matter to attend to: there were five vacant seats on the ayuntamiento (municipal council) that needed to be filled. The seats had been empty since the end of the previous year, when the *regidores* (council members) had migrated to the United States as braceros.¹ The absent *regidores* had all presumably been negatively impacted by the Parícutin volcanic eruption, which had been affecting communities in Michoacán's Sierra Purépecha since early 1943. The eruption's effects were so severe that, as noted in Chapters One and Two, federal officials exempted volcano refugees from the ban on Michoacán braceros.

Peribán's *regidores* were among the first wave of center-westerners to migrate through the Bracero Program, and volcano refugees from neighboring Sierra municipalities like Los Reyes, Parangaricutiro, and Uruapan joined them. According to migrant network theory, these early braceros would have established social networks that would then attract future migrants from their communities in the Sierra Purépecha, the mountainous region bordered by the Lerma-Chapala Basin to the north, the Pátzcuaro Basin to the east, the Tierra Caliente to the south, and the Tepalcatepec River to the west.² Regional knowledge of the Bracero Program would have been further reinforced in 1945 when, as noted in Chapters One and Two, a Contracting Center was established in Uruapan, the Sierra's principal population center. However, despite the early departures and the presence of the Contracting Center, rural workers from this region did not express as great an interest in migrating as braceros as their counterparts in the Lerma-Chapala Basin did. Prospective braceros from the Sierra, where 11 percent of Michoacán's bracero-eligible population lived, made 145 written bracero card requests – 10 percent of all the requests made by Michoacanos – during the program's 22 years.³ The proportional demand stands in marked contrast to the Lerma-Chapala Basin, where, as noted in Chapter Two, 61 percent of Michoacán's bracero-eligible population produced three-quarters of the state's written bracero card requests.

¹ Nicolás Blanco, En el libro de ACUERDOS que se lleva en la Secretaría del Honorable Ayuntamiento de esta localidad, a fojas número 57 cincuenta y siete frente, se encuentra centada el acta del tenor siguiente, June 15, 1944, AGHPEM, serie Peribán, caja 1, expediente 1, foja sin número.

² Massey, et al., "Theories of International Migration," 448-450.

³ According to the 1940 Population Census, there were 189,074 men aged 20 to 44 in Michoacán that year; 21,961 of these men lived in the Sierra Purépecha. Per the 1960 Population Census, there were 261,795 men aged 20 to 44 in Michoacán that year; 30,499 lived in the Sierra Purépecha. México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Sexto Censo de Población, 1940: Michoacán*, 13-15, 46-48, 73-75, 102-104, 130-132; *VIII Censo General de Población – 1960, 8 de Junio de 1960: Estado de Michoacán*, 185-216. Bracero card requests from the Sierra Purépecha are in AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 793, expediente 546.6/120, folders 1 and 3; caja 793, expediente 546.6/120-1; caja 795, expediente 546.6/120-15; AGN, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 593, expediente 546.6/1-15; AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1170; caja 884, expediente 546.6/190; caja 885, expedientes 546.6/225 and 546.6/236; caja 892, expediente 548.1/107; caja 893, expediente 548.1/138; caja 896, expediente 548.1/412; caja 897, expediente 548.1/438; AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 717, expedientes 546.6/176, 546.6/193, and 546.6/238; caja 719, expediente 546.6/433; AGHPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expedientes 1, 3, and 4; caja 2, expediente 7; caja 3, expedientes 8, 9, and 10; caja 4, expedientes 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15; caja 5, expedientes 16, 17, 18, and 19; caja 6, expedientes 20, 21, and 22.



Map 6.1: Michoacán, Sierra Purépecha municipalities shaded in red. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48542>.



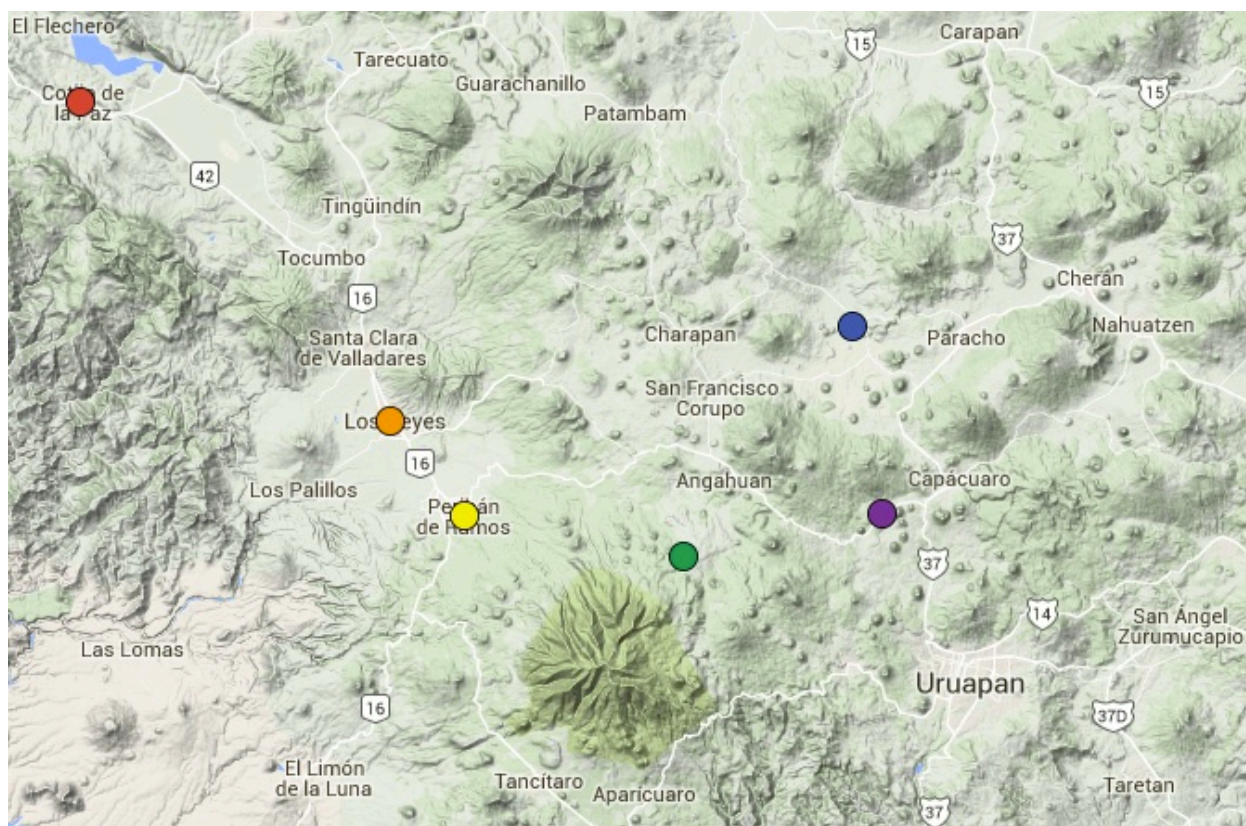
Map 6.2: Sierra Purépecha. Source: Google Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.google.com/maps>.

Previous chapters have explored why demand for bracero cards was high in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. This chapter takes a different tack, examining why demand for bracero cards was relatively depressed in the Sierra Purépecha. I will show that three factors tempered demand for bracero cards in this region. The first was the nature of the Cristero Rebellion in the area. Unlike the ideologically polarized fighting in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, Cristero clashes in this part of Michoacán were often, at bottom, boundary disputes between indigenous communities that had retained portions of their communal holdings during the expansion of commercial agriculture that marked the late Porfiriato. While some of these disputes continued into the years of the Bracero Program, they were not as disruptive as the clashes that occurred in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Second, because indigenous communities had been able to retain some of their holdings, *agrarismo* was not a strong force in this region, and there were fewer ejidos that could be hampered by the Agrarian Code's unintended effects than there were in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. And third, the Tepalcatepec Commission, a Tennessee Valley Authority-style project that was active from 1947 until 1961, promoted large-scale irrigation projects that opened new lands for exploitation in the Sierra Purépecha and the Tierra Caliente, creating new sources of wage work and thus strengthening an existing internal migratory tradition.⁴

⁴ For the Tepalcatepec Commission, see Marco A. Calderón Mólgora, "Desarrollo integral en las cuencas del Tepalcatepec y del Balsas," in *La transformación de los paisajes culturales en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, ed. Juan Ortiz Escamilla (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 227-258. For the Tennessee Valley

Absent the same type of political factors driving bracero contract demand in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, there were relatively few prospective braceros from the Sierra Purépecha, and they almost exclusively cited socioeconomic reasons in their requests. Both the comparatively low rates of emigration from this region and the predominance of socioeconomic motives for emigrating highlight how important, by contrast, political considerations were in emigration from the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Since they were not embroiled in the same kind of internecine political-agrarian conflicts or working in institutionally constrained ejidos, rural workers from the Sierra did not experience the same urgency to migrate as braceros, even though they knew it was an option.

The chapter begins with an overview of the Sierra Purépecha's religious and agrarian history, the course of the Cristero Rebellion in the region, and the implementation of the agrarian reform there. Next, I analyze the bracero card requests rural workers from this region sent to the federal and state governments. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the Tepalcatepec Commission and the internal migration patterns it promoted.



Map 6.3: Communities and municipalities analyzed in this chapter. Red: Cotija; Orange: Los Reyes; Yellow: Peribán; Green: San Juan Parangaricutiro; Blue: Nurio; Violet: San Lorenzo. Source: Google My Maps, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=16Du4HBxCJQ6DLZufA8eAMRC7BcY&usp=sharing>.

The Sierra Purépecha Before the Bracero Program

Authority, see David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 148-154, 364, 379.

Like their counterparts in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, residents of the Sierra Purépecha were faithful Catholics. But their Catholicism was not as heavily influenced by European doctrines like Social Catholicism. Rather, Catholic practices in the Sierra were shaped by indigenous Purépecha traditions, most notably the veneration of particular saints or icons.⁵ Of special importance was the cult of the Lord of the Miracles, an icon of Christ that reportedly restored mobility to a paralyzed indigenous man during the colonial period and granted the wishes of petitioners who danced before it; this cult was centered in San Juan Parangaricutiro. The Lord of the Miracles' feast day celebrations attracted thousands of Purépechas to San Juan, and worship of the image differentiated indigenous Sierra Catholics from non-indigenous ones. Clerical leaders frowned upon this "pagan" form of worship, but indigenous parishioners ignored these concerns and continued worshipping in their preferred manner.⁶

Indigenous Purépecha communities in the Sierra also found means to maintain direct control of their land holdings, even though nineteenth-century Liberal land laws – most notably the 1856 Lerdo Law and the Vacant Land Laws of 1883 and 1894 – mandated and facilitated the privatization of corporate holdings. In Charapan, several indigenous *barrios* (neighborhoods) agreed to fully cooperate with the privatization process so that local residents, and not private landowners from neighboring communities, could secure titles to their parcels.⁷ Indigenous rural workers in Cherán did the same.⁸ This cooperation led to a relatively high number of private owners in the Sierra Purépecha. According to the 1930 Agrarian Census, 6.16 percent of the Sierra's adult population owned land; as noted in Chapter Four, only 3.47 percent of the Lerma-Chapala Basin's adult population owned land at that time.⁹

Other Sierra rural workers had access to their own lands because their communities resisted the privatization of their corporate holdings and retained de facto ownership of communal properties. For example, San Juan Parangaricutiro's indigenous residents formed a privatization committee, but they steadfastly refused to consider the alienation of their communal forests. Three local *mestizo* (mixed-descent) families eventually claimed the community's cultivable lands. But because the indigenous residents continually delayed a hearing on the status of the forests (at one point, a community member stole the relevant documents and hid from the state government for two years), these remained under de facto communal control into the 1920s.¹⁰ Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine precisely how many Sierra rural workers retained access to communal lands; the officials who conducted the 1930 Agrarian Census

⁵ For a description of religious practices in the Sierra community of Cherán, see Ralph L. Beals, *Cherán: A Sierra Tarascan Village* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1946), 116-156.

⁶ Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 138-140.

⁷ Carlos García Mora, "Tierra y movimiento agrarista en la Sierra Purépecha," in *Jornadas de historia de occidente: Movimientos populares en el occidente de México, siglos XIX y XX* (Jiquilpan de Juárez, Michoacán: Centro de Estudios de la Revolución Mexicana "Lázaro Cárdenas," A.C., 1981), 47-101.

⁸ Beals, *Cherán*, 59. Beals conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Cherán during the early 1940s. All of his informants had private titles to their own small parcels.

⁹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Michoacán*, 12-14; México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Quinto Censo de Población, 15 de Mayo de 1930: Estado de Michoacán*, 11-12, 129-153. There were 4,433 private landowners in the Sierra Purépecha, and 71,914 residents aged 15 and older. Mexicans could own lands in their own name once they turned 16, but the Population Census only recorded the number of Sierra residents aged 15 and older.

¹⁰ Jennie Purnell, "With All Due Respect: Popular Resistance to the Privatization of Communal Lands in Nineteenth-Century Michoacán," *Latin American Research Review* 34:1 (1999): 85-121. San Juan's Purépecha residents continued working the community's cultivable lands after they had been privatized, but as sharecroppers or tenant farmers.

acknowledged that numerous communities still possessed communal lands, but since these holdings were not governed by revolutionary agrarian laws, they were not counted in the census.¹¹

Sierra rural workers who did not have access to their own lands or were seasonally unemployed took advantage of their proximity to the Tierra Caliente and traveled south to find work on the rice- and sugar-producing estates of that region.¹² Enrique Sahagún de la Parra, the son of a Cotija-based landowner who owned property in the Tierra Caliente municipality of Aguililla, noted that many Sierra rural workers essentially split their time between their home communities and the Tierra Caliente during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sahagún de la Parra also noted that trips to the Tierra Caliente were more frequent during lean years, such as when a drought afflicted the Sierra during the 1930s.¹³ Some Cherán rural workers who traveled to the Tierra Caliente went on to become merchants who brought back goods that were then sold in Sierra markets.¹⁴ Former muleteers from Cotija also strengthened their ties to the Tierra Caliente by using the railroad network to expand their commercial activities.¹⁵

The success of indigenous communities who wanted to keep control of their land holdings did not preclude the expansion of private grain-, coffee-, and sugar-producing estates in and around Los Reyes, Peribán, and Uruapan.¹⁶ But there were only 63 private agricultural properties that measured more than 500 hectares in the Sierra Purépecha – compared to at least 1,269 in the Lerma-Chapala Basin – and thus there were few clashes between private estate owners and communities.¹⁷ There were, however, numerous intercommunity boundary disputes. For example, at the same time that San Juan Parangaricutiro residents were delaying the privatization of their forests, they were also embroiled in a conflict with neighboring Parícutin over lands both communities had claimed since the eighteenth century. A similar boundary dispute occurred between residents of Quincio and Paracho. And a three-party conflict unfolded in Arantepacua, Cherán, and Nahuatzen; all three communities laid claim to the same lands, and none was willing to cede ground, even though state officials determined that the sixteenth-

¹¹ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola Ganadero, 1930: Michoacán*, 7.

¹² This internal migratory tradition dates to the colonial period. For a broad overview of the Tepalcatepec River Basin, which encompasses both the Sierra and the western Tierra Caliente, during the colonial period, see Patricia Escandón, “El dominio español en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec,” in *La transformación de los paisajes culturales en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, ed. Juan Ortiz Escamilla (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 19-76. For demographic shifts and mobility during the eighteenth century, see Luise M. Enkerlin Pauwells, “Espacio y población en la alcaldía mayor de Tancitaro durante el siglo XVIII,” in *La transformación de los paisajes culturales en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, ed. Juan Ortiz Escamilla (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 77-122. Rural workers from the Lerma-Chapala Basin municipality of Zacapu, which also has a significant Purépecha population, also migrated seasonally to Tierra Caliente estates. For their movements, see Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village*.

¹³ Enrique Sahagún de la Parra, “Así lo recuerdo...” in *La transformación de los paisajes culturales en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, ed. Juan Ortiz Escamilla (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 193-200.

¹⁴ Beals, *Cherán*, 4, 76-78.

¹⁵ Heriberto Moreno García, *Cotija* (Morelia: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1980), 113-120, 175, 184-189. Cotija’s commercial ties to the Tierra Caliente dated to the late colonial period.

¹⁶ Vicente González Méndez and Héctor Ortiz Ybarra, *Los Reyes, Tingüindín, Tancitaro, Tocumbo y Peribán* (Morelia, México: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1980), 31-32, 404-409; Francisco Miranda, *Uruapan* (Morelia, México: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1979), 208-209, 214.

¹⁷ México, Dirección General de Estadística, *Primer Censo Agrícola-Ganadero, 1930: Estado de Michoacán*, 12-14, 142-143.

century titles Arantepacua and Cherán residents were using to bolster their claims were actually forgeries.¹⁸

These boundary disputes and the agrarian autonomy enjoyed by Sierra communities influenced the course of the Cristero Rebellion in the region. Faithful Catholics in communities like Cherán and Zacán did oppose the revolutionary state's anticlericalism and they openly sympathized with the Cristeros.¹⁹ But despite this and the emergence of Cristero cells in Cotija and Los Reyes, few Sierra rural workers actively took up arms against the government during the conflict; according to historians Héctor Ortiz Ybarra and Vicente González Méndez, there were 500 active Cristeros in the area in and around Uruapan, a mere four percent of the total rebels fighting in Michoacán.²⁰ The low levels of Cristero activity were largely the result of agrarismo's weakness in the region. Since many Sierra rural workers still had access to their own lands, they had little incentive to push for land redistribution during the early 1920s, when Michoacán's state government started promoting the agrarian reform. Only three ejidos (one in the municipality of Los Reyes and two in Ziracuaretiro) were established in the region prior to the Cristero Rebellion.²¹ Agrarismo's weakness in the Sierra meant that there were few agrarista militias, the fighting units that antagonized Catholic rural workers in the Lerma-Chapala Basin and were then enlisted as government auxiliaries during the rebellion, there. Thus, Sierra Catholics had little need to actively rebel, and the government had few local allies to promote its agenda.

One Sierra community that did actively join the rebellion was San Juan Parangaricutiro. As Jennie Purnell demonstrates, San Juan's workers did so because they feared the revolutionary agrarian reform would result in the loss of the forested lands they had defended for decades. A group of agraristas from Parícutin mobilized against San Juan's Cristeros. But Parícutin's agraristas were not inspired by a desire to reclaim lands they had lost to private estates or break the social and cultural power of the Catholic Church. Rather, they were motivated by their centuries-long boundary dispute with San Juan. By declaring themselves agraristas, Parícutin rural workers hoped that the government would definitively grant them title to the lands that they already claimed. (The federal government ultimately rejected Parícutin's claims during the 1930s).²²

Popular support for the agrarian reform remained minimal in the Sierra after the rebellion's end, and this regional apathy resulted in the redistribution of a relatively paltry

¹⁸ Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 142. Arantepacua's title was dated 1519, the year Hernán Cortés first arrived in Mexico. Cherán's title was dated 1533 and was allegedly signed by Cortés himself.

¹⁹ Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 152-153, 156-157.

²⁰ Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion*, 85; González Méndez and Ortiz Ybarra, *Los Reyes, Tingüindín, Tancítaro, Tocumbo y Peribán*, 505-516; Moreno García, *Cotija*, 206-207. According to Meyer, there were 12,000 active Cristeros in Michoacán during the final year of the rebellion. The Cotija and Los Reyes cells launched assaults on Sierra communities. The Los Reyes Cristeros even planned to kidnap local municipal officials and establish their own government, although the plotters were discovered and then executed.

²¹ A. Obregón, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras, promovido por vecinos de Villa de Los Reyes, Estado de Michoacán, May 8, 1923, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XXVIII, Número 9, September 10, 1924, 148-149; A. Obregón, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras promovido por vecinos del pueblo de Ziracuaretiro, Estado de Michoacán, October 25, 1923, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, November 27, 1923, Tomo XXV, Número 72, 1,060-1,062; A. Obregón, Resolución en el expediente de dotación de tierras, promovido por vecinos de la ranchería de San Andrés Corú, Estado de Michoacán, October 25, 1923, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo XXV, Número 75, November 30, 1923, 1,120-1,121.

²² Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 155-156.

amount of lands. By the end of Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency in 1940, 7,427 ejidatarios had been granted use rights to 95,468 hectares in 73 Sierra ejidos (these figures include the three ejidos established prior to the Cristero Rebellion).²³ Some of the few self-professed agraristas in the Sierra were not even genuine supporters of the agrarian reform. For example, a group of 30 men who called themselves agraristas assumed control of Cherán's municipal government during the Cárdenas presidency (1934-1940). However, these new leaders were not responding to a demand for lands, since, as noted above, Cherán rural workers had retained control of their lands by privatizing their parcels. Rather, these men had declared themselves agraristas so that the federal government would back their bid for power. Cherán's residents initially accepted these "agraristas," but they became increasingly frustrated with their heavy-handed attempts to remain in power. After the federal government withdrew its support from the municipal government, the disgruntled residents attacked the "agraristas," killed at least 10 of them, and forced the survivors into exile in neighboring communities.²⁴

The establishment and expansion of ejidos all but ceased in the Sierra after 1940. During the years of the Bracero Program, 661 ejidatarios received use rights to 10,773 hectares in 23 newly created or expanded ejidos.²⁵ However, during this same period, four Sierra communities that had not managed to retain their communal lands had 19,217 hectares restored to them, and these communities were not required to subdivide these lands into government-owned, individual-use parcels.²⁶ And, as I will discuss in more detail below, federal agrarian authorities attempted to mediate the longstanding boundary disputes in the region.

Bracero Emigration from the Sierra Purépecha

As noted above and in Chapters One and Two, the beginning of the Bracero Program coincided with the birth of the Parícutin volcano in the countryside west of Uruapan. The initial eruptions destroyed the rival communities of San Juan Parangaricutiro and Parícutin, and the volcano's effects were so devastating that federal- and state-level officials gave preference to prospective braceros who had lost their lands or their crops. Between 1943 and 1952, the year

²³ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. Most of these lands – 86,850 hectares – were redistributed when the ejidos were first established; 7,115 ejidatarios received use rights in these initial grants. The remaining lands were redistributed in nine expansions; 312 ejidatarios received use rights during the expansions.

²⁴ Beals, *Cherán*, 112. Beals notes that federal authorities withdrew their support after a municipal employee shot and killed a soldier. The army had arrived in Cherán after the "agrarista" government requested their presence. Municipal authorities had hoped that the soldiers would help them pacify their truculent constituents, but the commanding officer soon realized that the municipal government did not enjoy popular support.

²⁵ Padrón e Historial de Núcleos Agrarios, accessed June 15, 2015, <http://phina.ran.gob.mx/phina2/>. Only nine ejidos were established in the Sierra during the years of the Bracero Program; 310 ejidatarios received use rights to 7,372 hectares when these ejidos were established. The remaining lands were redistributed in 14 expanded ejidos.

²⁶ Manuel Ávila Camacho, Resolución en el expediente de titulación de terrenos comunales del poblado Aranza, Estado de Michoacán, June 5, 1946, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CLX, Número 28, February 3, 1947, 5-7; Miguel Alemán, Resolución sobre conflicto por límites y confirmación y titulación de terrenos comunales del poblado San Miguel Pomacuarán, en Paracho, Mich., October 31, 1951, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CXCIII, Número 18, July 21, 1952, 11-12; Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Resolución sobre conflictos por límites y titulación de terrenos comunales del poblado San Francisco Acachuén, en Chilchota, Mich., September 9, 1953, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCIV, Número 10, May 14, 1954, 7-9; Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Resolución sobre conflicto por límites y confirmación y titulación de terrenos comunales al poblado San Francisco Pichátaro, en Tingambato, Mich., December 23, 1953, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCV, Número 44, Sección Segunda, August 20, 1954, 7-10.

the volcano stopped erupting, rural workers from the Sierra Purépecha sent 47 written bracero card requests to federal and state authorities; 33 of these requests explicitly cited the continuing volcanic eruption as the factor motivating the desire to migrate. A February 1945 letter that J. Isabel Galván Ruiz, the jefe de tenencia (community chief) in the Los Reyes community of Zacán, sent to the state legislature is representative of these requests. After two years of daily volcanic activity, a thick layer of ash had “covered our cultivable lands, destroyed our fruit trees, and finished off everything else that helped us provide for our families.” The community members’ farm animals had also perished because of the lack of feed, the price of daily consumables – maize, rice, cooking lard, and sugar – had skyrocketed, and local children had been reduced to a state of “near nakedness.” Because of all of this, Galván Ruiz hoped that at least some of Zacán’s rural workers would be allowed to migrate as braceros.²⁷

After the eruption ended, Victoriano Anguiano, a federal judge and native of San Juan Parangaricutiro, noted that his compatriots had “survived so many disgraces because they had been allowed to emigrate to the United States.”²⁸ But San Juan rural workers soon had another motive to migrate. In April 1953, Tomás Echeverría Campoverde and 99 of his neighbors requested bracero cards. The prospective braceros had been resettled in Uruapan ejidos after San Juan’s destruction. But the refugees now wanted to leave for the United States because the leaders of these ejidos had brought in “outsiders who have disrupted the tranquility of our families and seized control of our water source.”²⁹

Nearly one decade after San Juan rural workers expressed an interest in migrating because of their involvement in an agrarian conflict, rural workers from Nurio, in the municipality of Paracho, made two similar bracero card requests. In February 1962, Juan Rubio and 30 other Nurio rural workers asked the state government for bracero cards. The prospective braceros stated that the ash that had fallen during the Parícutin eruption was still hampering Nurio’s lands, and that as a result they “completely lacked the economic resources necessary to maintain our homes and families.” But Rubio and the would-be migrants cited an additional factor: Nurio was involved in boundary disputes with San Bartolomé Cocucho and San Felipe de los Herreros, two communities in the neighboring municipality of Charapan.³⁰ In April 1963, another group of Nurio rural workers requested bracero cards, and they also mentioned that they were litigating a boundary dispute with San Felipe de los Herreros.³¹

Nurio residents had asked the federal government to resolve their boundary disputes with Cocucho and San Felipe in August 1944. Nurio was contesting 453 hectares with Cocucho, and 2,396 hectares with San Felipe. In December 1954, the federal Agrarian Department determined that Nurio had controlled 1,395 hectares since “time immemorial.” But the community could not corroborate its claims to the contested lands. As a result, federal authorities granted Nurio title to

²⁷ J. Isabel Galván Ruiz to Ciudadano José Garibay Romero, February 21, 1945, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 1, expediente 3, foja 37/38.

²⁸ Lic. Victoriano Anguiano to Señor don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, March 31, 1954, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1170, fojas sin número.

²⁹ Enrique Rodríguez Cano to Sr. Ing. Cástulo Villaseñor, April 16, 1953, AGN, fondo Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, caja 301, expediente 404.1/1170, foja sin número. Rodríguez Cano was President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines’s secretary, and Villaseñor was the head of the federal Agrarian Department. The bracero card request was initially sent to the president, but Rodríguez Cano transcribed it and forwarded it to Villaseñor.

³⁰ Juan Rubio and others to C. Melecio Aguilar Ferreira, February 28, 1962, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 21, fojas 123-124.

³¹ José Alejo Alejo to C. Gobernador Constitucional del Edo., April 1, 1963, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 3, expediente 9, foja 243.

its 1,395 hectares, but it granted the disputed lands to Cocucho and San Felipe. With this decision, the federal government declared the boundary disputes resolved and “non-existent.”³²

The bracero card requests sent by San Juan and Nurio rural workers demonstrate that political and agrarian conflicts could prompt Sierra rural workers to want to migrate, much like their counterparts in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. But there were different political and agrarian factors at play in the Sierra Purépecha. The conflicts described above were not a byproduct of widespread Catholic resistance to the agrarian reform. Rather, they were localized conflicts that had little connection to revolutionary policies. The proximate cause of the San Juan conflict was the relocation of that community’s residents following the Parícutin eruption. And the clashes between Nurio, San Felipe, and Cocucho were the type of intercommunity boundary disputes that had been occurring in the Sierra for centuries. While federal agrarian authorities did intervene in this conflict, they did so as mediators. They did not have to determine if the rural workers involved in the clashes were eligible for use rights, decide if properties were eligible for expropriation, or perform any of the duties associated with the establishment of ejidos.

The San Juan and Nurio requests were also exceptional, since all the other bracero card requests made by Sierra Purépecha rural workers during the 1950s and 1960s highlighted socioeconomic reasons for wanting to migrate, such as landlessness or seasonal unemployment, that were not affected by political factors. For example, in July 1959, Luis González Nava and other rural workers from San Lorenzo, in the municipality of Uruapan, wrote to President Adolfo López Mateos to ask for bracero cards.³³ González Nava and ten of his neighbors renewed their petition the following April. The prospective braceros explained that they were landless, unemployed non-ejidatarios who could not provide even “the most indispensable things for our families.”³⁴ The would-be San Lorenzo migrants made yet another bracero card request in July 1960.³⁵

González Nava and his neighbors were landless, but not because they had been forced off their lands by local political rivals, or because federal- and state-level officials had ignored or denied a request for ejido lands. There was no ejido in San Lorenzo, and there is no record of rural workers there ever petitioning for one to be established. It is possible that an ejido request was never made official because it was not published in the state government’s newspaper (as noted in Chapter Five, this was a prerequisite for an ejido petition to be considered by agrarian officials), or perhaps the private owners whose lands would be expropriated blocked the process, like some owners in the Lerma-Chapala Basin did. But a more plausible explanation is that San Lorenzo rural workers were never interested in establishing an ejido in their community, since, as noted above, there was never much popular support for agrarismo in the Sierra Purépecha. In fact, no bracero card requests made by Sierra rural workers cited pending or denied requests for ejido lands as the reason they wanted to migrate, a practice that was relatively common in the Lerma-Chapala Basin.

³² Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Resolución sobre conflictos por límites, confirmación y situación de bienes comunales al poblado Nurio, en Paracho, Mich., December 8, 1954, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCIX, Número 10, March 11, 1955, 16-17.

³³ Summary of a July 1, 1959 letter from Luis González Nava to C. Presidente, July 2, 1959, AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 717, expediente 546.6/193, foja sin número.

³⁴ Luiz González Nava and others to C. Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, April 18, 1960, AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 719, expediente 546.6/433, foja sin número.

³⁵ Summary of a July 25, 1960 written by Luis González Nava, August 17, 1960, AGN, fondo Adolfo López Mateos, caja 719, expediente 546.6/433, foja sin número.

Even when prospective Sierra braceros came from ejidos that were awaiting an official decision, they failed to mention this as a motivating factor. In May 1962, Ignacio Chávez, the comisariado ejidal (ejido president) of Los Limones, in the municipality of Los Reyes, asked the state government for 30 to 35 bracero cards. The prospective braceros had been searching for a way “to gather some funds for the construction of the local schoolhouse,” and they decided that migrating to the United States would allow them to collect “the most amount of money possible.”³⁶ What Chávez did not mention in the request was that Los Limones’s ejidatarios were waiting to hear the final decision on an expansion request they had filed in November 1954. Michoacán’s government denied the request in April 1960 after the Agrarian Commission determined that there were no expropriation-eligible lands within seven kilometers of Los Limones (as noted in Chapter Five, all ejido lands had to be within seven kilometers of the community that requested them). But, as mandated by the Agrarian Code, the state government’s decision was forwarded to the federal Agrarian Department for review, and federal authorities had yet to render their decision when Comisariado Ejidal Chávez requested bracero cards (the federal government upheld the denial in May 1968).³⁷

Chávez’s omission may be an indication that Los Limones’s prospective braceros had already decided that the ejido expansion request was a lost cause. Or perhaps the expansion was not too great a priority because Los Limones rural workers could find work on local sugar-producing estates and mills. However, work on sugar estates and mills was seasonal, and some seasonally unemployed workers sought to migrate as braceros. One month after asking for bracero cards so that a new schoolhouse could be built in Los Limones, Ignacio Chávez wrote to the state government. He repeated his request for bracero cards, but now he cited a new motive. The most recent sugar harvesting period had just ended, and all the rural workers in the community were now unemployed. Since there was “absolutely nowhere to work,” and since they feared that the “specter of hunger would soon enter their houses,” the prospective braceros hoped that the state government would look kindly upon their request.³⁸

Sugar estate and mill owners at times seconded the bracero card requests sent by seasonally unemployed Sierra workers. In June 1962, Cornelio Méndez Gómez, a Los Reyes-based landowner and cattle rancher, wrote to the state government to ask for cards for 10 of his employees. Méndez Gómez noted that he could not continue employing the prospective braceros because the sugar harvest had ended, and he hoped that they would be allowed to migrate. If the state government agreed to the request, Méndez Gómez stated that he would speak to Los Reyes’s municipal president to ensure that his employees received the proper documents.³⁹ Méndez Gómez probably felt confident that the municipal government would look kindly upon his request. He had served a term as Los Reyes’s municipal president during the late 1950s, during which time he certified that seasonally unemployed sugar workers interested in migrating

³⁶ Ignacio Chávez to C. David Franco Rodríguez, May 26, 1962, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, foja 89.

³⁷ Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Resolución sobre ampliación de ejido al poblado Los Limones, en Los Reyes, Mich., May 7, 1968, published in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Tomo CCLXXXIX, Número 5, July 5, 1968, 13.

³⁸ Ignacio Chávez to Sr. Lic. Don David Franco Rodríguez, June 5, 1962, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, foja 91.

³⁹ Cornelio Méndez Gómez to Sr. Lic. Dn. Eduardo Poletti Bazán, June 12, 1962, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, fojas 106-107.

were indeed unemployed, and a member of his administration, Francisco Quintero Morales, was leading the municipal government when he made his request.⁴⁰

Méndez Gómez's requests – he made another request on behalf of his employees in 1963 – indicate three things.⁴¹ First, his offer to speak with Los Reyes's municipal president and acquire the necessary documents so his employees could migrate is another example of how the bracero selection process could be influenced by local actors that were not members of the municipal government; it is not clear if Municipal President Quintero Morales gave bracero cards to his predecessor's employees in 1962, but in 1963 he did ask for cards for the "considerable number" of seasonally unemployed sugar workers in Los Reyes.⁴² Second, the requests show how the political and agrarian conditions of the Sierra Purépecha starkly differed from those in the Lerma-Chapala Basin, particularly in Jalisco. As noted in Chapter Four, conservative Lerma-Chapala Basin landowners that had scuttled the creation of ejidos intervened with local municipal governments to prevent the departure of their workforce. Méndez's Gómez's personal views on the agrarian reform cannot be gleaned from the available documentary evidence, but he clearly had no qualms about his employees migrating to the United States, at least during times of the year when agricultural activities in Los Reyes were limited. And third, while employers with local political connections lobbied on their behalf, the proximate factor influencing Los Reyes rural workers desire to migrate – seasonal unemployment – was strictly socioeconomic.

The Tepalcatepec Commission

Another factor that suppressed demand for bracero cards in the eruption zone was the establishment of the Tepalcatepec Commission in 1947. As noted by Marco Calderón Mólgora, the Commission's establishment was motivated by a longstanding desire to boost development levels in central and southern Michoacán. Inspired by the New Deal-era Tennessee Valley Authority, federal officials in the 1940s decided that large-scale hydroelectric and irrigation projects would be the key to modernizing the region. The Commission demarcated an 18,000-square kilometer zone of operations that included the Sierra Purépecha and the lands of the Tierra Caliente immediately to the south. By the end of President Miguel Alemán's term in 1952, over \$100 million pesos had been invested in the construction of 7 dams and reservoirs – including the San Juanico reservoir in Cotija and the Jicalán reservoir in Uruapan – 90 kilometers of irrigation canals, the Zumpimito hydroelectric power plant in Uruapan, and a paved road that connected Uruapan and Apatzingán. The commission's spending nearly doubled during President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines's administration (1952-1958), and the continuing irrigation projects had opened up 77,000 hectares to cultivation when he left office. By the time the Tepalcatepec Commission was folded into the newly established Balsas River Commission in 1961, more than 90,000 hectares of land had become available for cultivation, and a total of 3

⁴⁰ Manuel Miranda M. and others, *Lista de Aspirantes a Braseros (sic) de Parte de las Organizaciones que Forman la Federación (sic) Regional Obrera y Campesina C.T.M.*, August 21, 1959, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 2, expediente 7, foja 302. Quintero Morales was the municipal secretary when Méndez Gómez was president.

⁴¹ Cornelio Méndez Gómez to Sr. Lic. Don Agustín Arriaga Rivera, undated, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 11, foja 53. Although this document is undated, it is stored in a file that only contains documents produced in 1963.

⁴² Francisco Quintero Morales to C. Profr. Leodegario López Ramírez, July 26, 1963, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 13, foja 104.

hydroelectric power plants, 11 dams and reservoirs, and 781 kilometers of irrigation canals had been built.⁴³

There was no comparable development project in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Or, to be more precise, there was no project there that opened new lands to cultivation.⁴⁴ In 1942, the federal government began perforating the lands near the Lerma River's headwaters in the State of Mexico and installing massive irrigation pumps and pipes. But the purpose of this project was to supply Mexico City with more drinking water, not to make new lands available for Lerma-Chapala Basin rural workers. When the project was completed in 1951, irrigation pumps sent 1,500 gallons of water per second east to the Valley of Mexico, not west to Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán; in 1965, the system's capacity was increased to 4,000 gallons per second. The project did lead to the installation of potable water and sewage systems in the communities near the Lerma's headwaters, but it provided no benefits to the communities that Lerma-Chapala Basin braceros called home.⁴⁵

Significant portions of the lands opened by the Tepalcatepec Commission were planted with cotton. During the 1949-1950 agricultural cycle, only 12 hectares of cotton were planted and harvested in the Tierra Caliente. Ten years later that number had increased to 4,099 hectares, and most of the production was concentrated in the municipalities of Buenavista and Zaragoza (contemporary Múgica). The harvest relied heavily on manual labor. During the mid-1960s, approximately 15,000 seasonal workers collected the cotton harvest in the Apatzingán region. These workers came from throughout Mexico, but, according to Diana Sánchez Andrade, the majority of them were from communities in the Sierra Purépecha.⁴⁶

The Tepalcatepec Commission effectively reinforced an internal migratory tradition that stretched back to the colonial period and stifled the growth of any migrant networks that may have started to take shape when Parícutin refugees were allowed to migrate as braceros. As

⁴³ Calderón Mólgora, "Desarrollo integral en las cuencas del Tepalcatepec y del Balsas," 228-245; Juan Ortiz Escamilla and Silvia Méndez Maín, "La Ruana: Un modelo de centro ejidal," in *Las transformaciones de los paisajes culturales en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, ed. Juan Ortiz Escamilla (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 261-266. In addition to wanting to boost agricultural production, authorities hoped that controlling the region's streams and rivers would reduce disease rates, particularly malaria. Officials were also inspired by the success that the Cusis, a landowning family in the Tierra Caliente, had had with irrigation projects on their estates. The Ruiz Cortines administration invested \$205 million pesos in Commission projects. In addition to these projects noted in the text, paved roads that connected Uruapan to the Pacific coast and the western and eastern halves of the Tierra Caliente were built. Potable water was also introduced into numerous communities.

⁴⁴ There were some irrigation and drainage projects in the Chapala Ciénega and the Zamora Valley during the 1930s, but these works consisted mostly of the completion of projects that had been interrupted by the 1910 Revolution, or the maintenance of canals and reservoirs that had been built during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For these, see Martín Sánchez Rodríguez, "Notas sobre proyectos de irrigación en México antes y después de 1910," in *Mexico in Transition: New Perspectives on Mexican Agrarian History, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries – México y sus transiciones: Reconsideraciones sobre la historia agraria mexicana, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Antonio Escobar Ohmstede and Matthew Butler (México, D.F.: CIESAS, 2013) 271-272, 275-277.

⁴⁵ Joel Simon, *Endangered Mexico: An Environment on the Edge* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1997), 70-72. This project actually damaged the Lerma-Chapala Basin. After the project's completion, the Lerma River's starting point was shifted downstream from its headwaters. The new starting point was next to an industrial complex that dumped its waste directly into the river, and those contaminants flowed all the way to Lake Chapala.

⁴⁶ Ortiz Escamilla and Méndez Maín, "La Ruana," 287-288; Diana E. Sánchez Andrade, "De la tierra fría a la Tierra Caliente: Deterioro ambiental y transformación del paisaje en la microcuenca del Cupatitzio, durante el siglo XX," in *La transformación de los paisajes culturales en la cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, ed. Juan Ortiz Escamilla (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 347-349. Sánchez Andrade does not note what percentage of internal migrant workers were from the Meseta Purépecha. There were 1,500 hectares planted with cotton in Zaragoza, and 1,302 in Buenavista.

mentioned above, rural workers and merchants from the Sierra regularly looked south for work and trade goods. Even when their counterparts in the Lerma-Chapala Basin began setting their sights north during the 1920s and 1930s, Sierra residents continued to rely on their ties to the Tierra Caliente when they experienced socioeconomic difficulties. Thus, when the Commission-backed projects opened up new lands and created new employment opportunities, rural workers from the eruption zone could settle back into familiar work habits as opposed to journeying to the United States.

Not everyone in the Sierra Purépecha benefitted from the works of the Tepalcatepec Commission, and those that did not sought to migrate as braceros. When the San Juanico Reservoir was built in Cotija, the waters of Lake Magdalena were drained and diverted into the reservoir. This made 3,000 hectares available for cultivation. However, according to Heriberto Moreno García, the use rights for these newly opened lands were granted to rural workers and ejidatarios from the municipalities of Tingüindín and Tocumbo, not Cotija; some from Cotija who did not secure use rights opted to migrate to the United States.⁴⁷ Among those interested in leaving Cotija for the United States were Rogelio and J. Luis Estrada Reyes. In June 1963, their father, Nemesio Estrada Gutiérrez, wrote to Governor Agustín Arriaga Rivera to request bracero cards for them. Estrada Gutiérrez stated that his sons wanted to migrate because they wanted to help support him financially and because there was no work to be found in Cotija.⁴⁸

However, the Estrada Reyes brothers faced an additional hurdle. As shown in Chapter Two, Michoacán's state government linked the distribution of bracero cards to demand during the final years of the Bracero Program. Because demand for bracero cards in the Sierra Purépecha was relatively low, only nine percent of the cards sent by the federal government to Michoacán were distributed among rural workers from the area during the program's final six years.⁴⁹ This means that the relatively few who wanted to leave the country may have resorted to subterfuge. In June 1962, Rubén Ochoa Zambrano of Los Reyes requested an unspecified number of bracero cards from the state government. In his letter, Ochoa Zambrano stated that he was certain that prospective braceros from Los Reyes had managed to acquire the proper documentation in other states. Apparently they had done so through friends that they had in these other states.⁵⁰

Ochoa Zambrano did not specify which state Los Reyes rural workers were receiving their bracero cards in. It is likely, however, that they were traveling to Jalisco, which borders the Sierra Purépecha to the west. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Jalisco's government distributed its allotment of bracero cards relatively liberally throughout that state, which meant that there was a good probability that cards were available in Jilotlán, Quitupan, Valle de Juárez, and other municipalities that border Michoacán. There was also precedent for this type of evasion of Bracero Program restrictions in the region. As shown in Chapter One, when Jalisco rural workers were barred from receiving bracero cards during the mid-1940s, many were discovered

⁴⁷ Moreno García, *Cotija*, 220.

⁴⁸ Nemesio Estrada Gutiérrez to Sr. Lic. Agustín Arriaga R., June 26, 1963, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 4, expediente 11, foja 11.

⁴⁹ I was able to document how Michoacán's government distributed 16,128 bracero cards between 1959 and 1964. A total of 1,463 cards were sent to the 16 Sierra municipalities. The distribution was as follows: 85 to Cotija; 80 to Charapan; 75 to Cherán; 190 to Chilchota; 240 to Los Reyes; 70 to Nahuatzen; 50 to Nuevo Parangaricutiro; 185 to Paracho; 50 to Peribán; 50 to Tancítaro; 50 to Taretan; 70 to Tingambato; 50 to Tingüindín; 95 to Tocumbo; 65 to Uruapan; and 58 to Ziracuaretiro.

⁵⁰ Rubén Ochoa Zambrano to Sr. Oficial Mayor, June 14, 1962, AGHPPEM, fondo Secretaría de Gobierno, sección Gobernación, serie Programa Braceros, caja 6, expediente 22, foja 116.

masquerading as residents of Los Reyes so they could then receive cards that were meant for Parícutin refugees. If the prospective braceros Ochoa Zambrano referred to did have friends in Jalisco or were willing to pay municipal authorities there for bracero cards, then they could have easily passed themselves off as residents of the neighboring state.

Conclusion

This chapter examined why demand for bracero cards in Michoacán's Sierra Purépecha was lower than it was in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Sierra rural workers did not express an urgent need to migrate as braceros because they lived and worked in a different political, agrarian, and religious context than their counterparts to the north. Since many Sierra communities and rural workers had access to their own lands, there was little popular support for the government-sponsored agrarian reform in the region. This meant that there were fewer structurally constrained ejidos in the Sierra than there were in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. It also meant that agrarian conflicts in the region were usually localized boundary disputes, not clashes that were influenced by a broader Catholic-inspired rejection of the revolutionary state. And after the Tepalcatepec Commission opened tens of thousands of hectares to cultivation in the Tierra Caliente, many Sierra rural workers were able to find wage labor close to home.

The relatively few Sierra rural workers who expressed an interest in migrating as braceros almost always highlighted simple socioeconomic motives in their bracero card requests and rarely mentioned any political factors. This demonstrates that there were prospective center-western braceros whose motivations closely aligned with the traditional interpretation that migration is primarily driven by structural socioeconomic factors. But it also indirectly underscores just how disruptive the agrarian reform and conservative Catholic opposition to it were in the Lerma-Chapala Basin. Sierra rural workers did not have to grapple with the effects of ongoing intra-community clashes between pro- and anti-government factions or the Agrarian Code's unintended effects. As a result, there was not as great a need to emigrate from the region. Put another way, the decision to leave Guanajuato, Jalisco, or Michoacán could not be divorced from the presence of intense conflicts – political, agrarian, and religious – that wracked all three states during the middle of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

The end of the Bracero Program did not mean the end of proposals for Mexico-United States guest worker initiatives. In 1972, Mexican President Luis Echeverría announced that because his government believed that it was important to manage migration, he would discuss renewing the Bracero Program with U.S. President Richard Nixon during a meeting between the two.¹ One year later, during a summit meeting between Mexican and North American legislators, members of the Mexican delegation seemed confident that a legal framework to regulate migration could be agreed to, especially since “Mexican workers find it necessary to work in the U.S., and the North American economy needs these workers.”² But following a meeting with U.S. President Gerald Ford in the autumn of 1974, Echeverría announced that the Bracero Program would not be revived. Echeverría feared that a new program would lead to unchecked departures and do nothing to solve what he described as the “migratory problem.” For Echeverría, only more government investment in rural areas would convince Mexican workers to “fix their roots in their own lands.”³

The Mexican and U.S. governments would not seriously discuss a guest worker agreement again until Vicente Fox was elected president in 2000. Fox, a native and former governor of the key migrant-sending state of Guanajuato, vowed when he took office that he would govern in the name of all Mexicans, including the “heroes” who migrated to the U.S. to work. Fox’s administration hoped that a new guest worker program would become part of an expanded North American Free Trade Agreement – NAFTA, an initiative that beginning in 1994 reduced trade barriers between Mexico, the U.S., and Canada – and bilateral negotiations began in early 2001. The Mexican delegation proposed a temporary guest worker program that was sensitive to the number of available jobs in the U.S. and the number of available workers in Mexico. To ensure that the demand to migrate would not spiral upward, Fox’s government pledged to invest funds in regions of the country with high emigration rates. Mexican diplomats were hopeful that an agreement could be reached, but negotiations stalled when U.S. foreign policy was reoriented towards the Middle East after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Fox and U.S. President George W. Bush announced in early 2002 that a migratory agreement that included a guest worker program was still a goal of both their governments, but no agreement was ever reached.⁴

Echeverría’s and Fox’s stated belief that increased government investment in rural areas would limit or prevent emigration demonstrates that both leaders interpreted Mexico-United

¹ César Silva Rojas, “Braceros: Echeverría buscará con los E.U. otro convenio,” *La Prensa*, May 16, 1972, 2. Newspaper clip in AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 1333A, expediente 2, fojas 57-58.

² Relaciones Bilaterales entre México y los Estados Unidos de América, May 1973, AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 1506A, expediente 3, fojas 179, 189.

³ César Silva Rojas, “Muro de Progreso Contra Bracerismo, Mejor vida campesina única solución: LEA,” *La Prensa*, October 23, 1974, 3, 44. Newspaper clip stored in AGN, fondo Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, caja 1676C, expediente 8, fojas 60-61.

⁴ For the negotiations of the early 2000s, see Délano, *Mexico and Its Diaspora in the United States*, 165-198. In addition to a revived guest worker program, Mexican diplomats wanted the nearly 5 million undocumented Mexicans living in the U.S. to be granted some form of legal residency status. For NAFTA and the other market-based economic reforms of the late twentieth century, see Enrique Cárdenas, *La política económica en México, 1950-1994* (México: El Colegio de México; Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996); and Nora Lustig, *Mexico: The Remaking of an Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998).

States migration as a strictly socioeconomic phenomenon. But the written bracero contract requests made by Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán rural workers during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s clearly show that the socioeconomic standing of migrant workers was deeply shaped by local-level politics. The center-west became the primary migrant-sending region because its particular political climate – specifically, the continuation of community-level religious-political conflicts that began in the 1920s and the unintended effects of a politicized agrarian reform that had supposedly benefitted hundreds of thousands – contributed to the socioeconomic marginalization of rural workers there. Funneling government funds to migrant-sending communities would have done little to resolve the “migratory problem,” since increased state spending would not have addressed the underlying political factors that influenced individual decisions to migrate.

In fact, direct government investment in rural Mexico has contributed to increased local-level political discord in the period after the Bracero Program. In late 1988, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari launched the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL by its Spanish initials). The program created Municipal Funds that allowed the federal government to send tax revenues directly to municipal authorities. It also stipulated that the federal government would pay between one-half and three-quarters of the costs associated with community-level development projects, such as schoolhouses or local roads, so long as the total costs of these projects did not exceed US\$50,000 (the remaining costs would be paid by state governments). Total federal-level PRONASOL spending grew from US\$600 million in 1989 to US\$2.2 billion in 1993, but the program generated new political tensions. Because PRONASOL project costs were capped at US\$50,000 per community, communities first had to discuss which projects they would submit for consideration, and this inevitably led to different groups lobbying for different projects. Once an agreement was reached, federal- and state-level officials had to approve the distribution of funds, and there were soon allegations that projects proposed by communities that had supported opposition candidates were denied funds, or that projects would only be approved in exchange for electoral support. The end result was that some municipalities received 10 times more PRONASOL funds per capita than their neighbors.⁵ Thus, although PRONASOL was not explicitly designed as a means to curb emigration, the way funds were distributed does show that the direct investments proposed by Presidents Echeverría and Fox leads to more of the political pressures – internal community divisions, favoritism of certain communities by corrupt officials – that contribute to emigration.

Echeverría's and Fox's governments also seemed to believe that simply agreeing to participate in a guest worker program would allow them to successfully manage migration. President Manuel Ávila Camacho's administration had also been confident that it could effectively regulate departures when it agreed to participate in the Bracero Program in 1942. But the massive documentary trail produced by the program's administration shows that federal officials quickly lost control of the bracero recruitment and selection process when they attempted to centralize it in Mexico City, and they were then forced to delegate those responsibilities to their state-level counterparts. After this, state authorities never seriously considered taking direct control of the recruitment and selection process because they decided that municipal authorities could better determine who would benefit from migrating and how to use migration as a means of maintaining social peace. Municipal officials then used the Bracero Program to enrich themselves or they tailored it to meet their specific political needs. Municipal

⁵ Victoria E. Rodríguez, *Decentralization in Mexico: From Reforma Municipal to Solidaridad to Nuevo Federalismo* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 77-82, 101-106.

corruption in turn contributed to undocumented migration, since rural workers unable or unwilling to curry the favor of municipal leaders opted to enter the United States without a bracero contract.

All evidence suggests that a revived Bracero Program would have resulted in the same federal failures and municipal corruption. Like their mid-century counterparts, many post-Bracero Program federal initiatives faltered, with one of the most notable examples being the Echeverría administration's failed attempt to nationalize the pharmaceutical birth control industry.⁶ And a 1984 constitutional amendment granted municipal governments a greater degree of formal political autonomy, so if they had once again been tasked with selecting and recruiting migrant workers, local corruption would likely have gone unchecked again.⁷ The increased political pluralism of the 1980s and 1990s would have also complicated the administration of a new guest worker initiative. By 1996, members of opposition parties like the conservative PAN or the Partido de la Revolución Democrática – PRD, a leftist party established in 1989 by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, a former governor of Michoacán and the son of former president Lázaro Cárdenas – governed 49.50 percent of municipalities in the center-western migrant-sending states, and members of the PAN, including future president Vicente Fox, governed Guanajuato and Jalisco.⁸ Much like PRONASOL funds, work contracts could have easily been withheld from jurisdictions controlled by opposition parties and funneled towards jurisdictions that had remained loyal to the PRI.

Ultimately, what the Bracero Program shows us is that even when guest worker programs are put in place to facilitate migration, managing the movement of peoples across borders is a politically fraught endeavor. It is practically impossible to depoliticize guest worker programs, since government officials have to define eligibility requirements and ultimately decide who is allowed to migrate. And as the experience of center-western braceros demonstrates, the decision to migrate was driven by political as well as socioeconomic factors.

⁶ For the nationalization of the pharmaceutical birth control industry, see Gabriela Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories: Mexican Peasants, National Projects, and the Making of the Pill* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009). Echeverría pushed through the nationalization because one of the active ingredients in the birth control pill could only be found in *barbasco*, a wild yam native to southern Mexico. However, the initiative faltered because scientists synthesized the contraceptive chemicals found in *barbasco* shortly after the company's establishment.

⁷ For municipal autonomy measures, see Rodríguez, *Decentralization in Mexico*, 53-57, 73-76.

⁸ For control of municipal governments by opposition parties, see Rodríguez, *Decentralization in Mexico*, 55. For the “democratic opening,” as the increased pluralism of the 1980s and 1990s is often referred to, see José Woldenberg, *Historia mínima de la transición democrática en México* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 2012).

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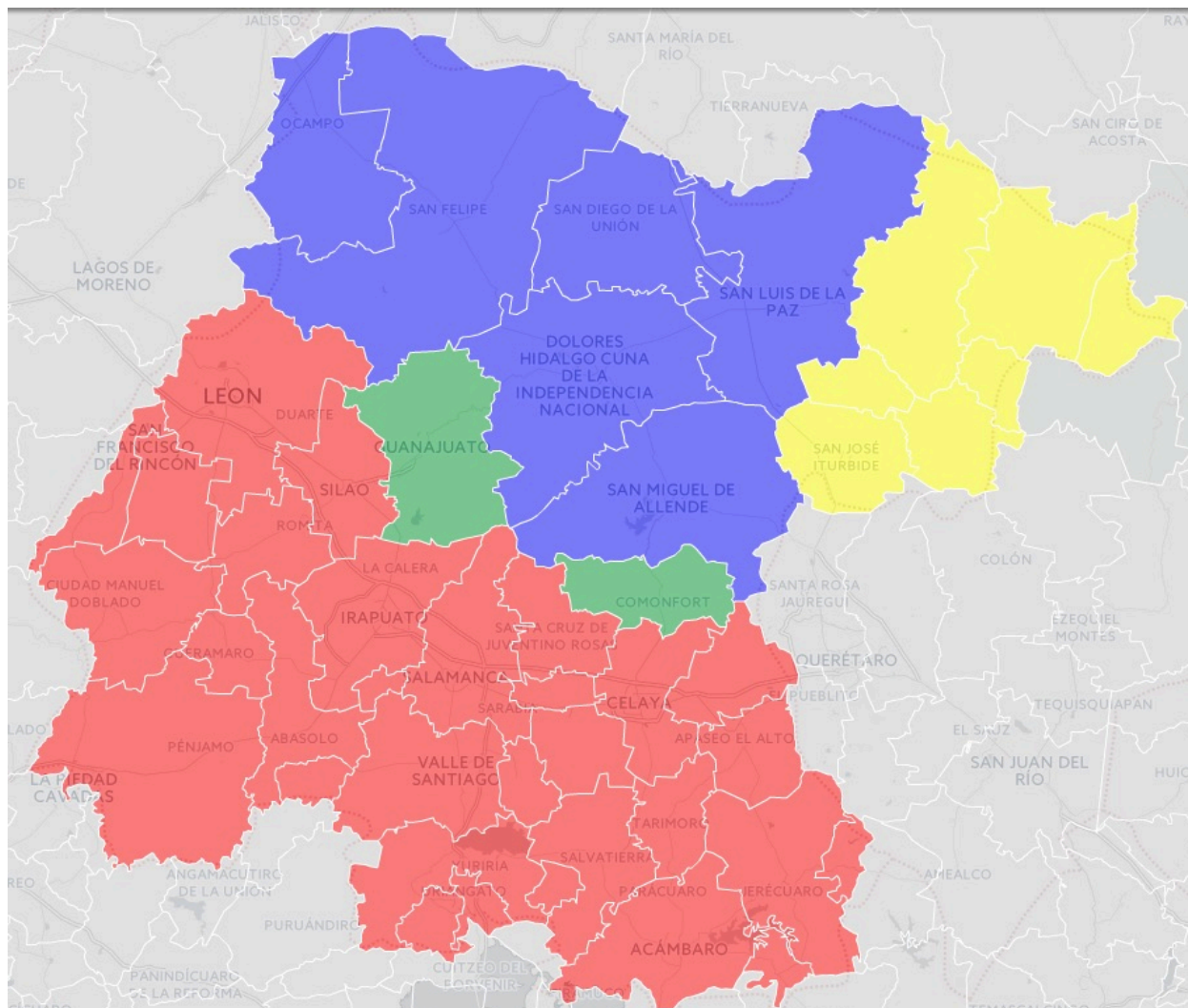
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Appendix A

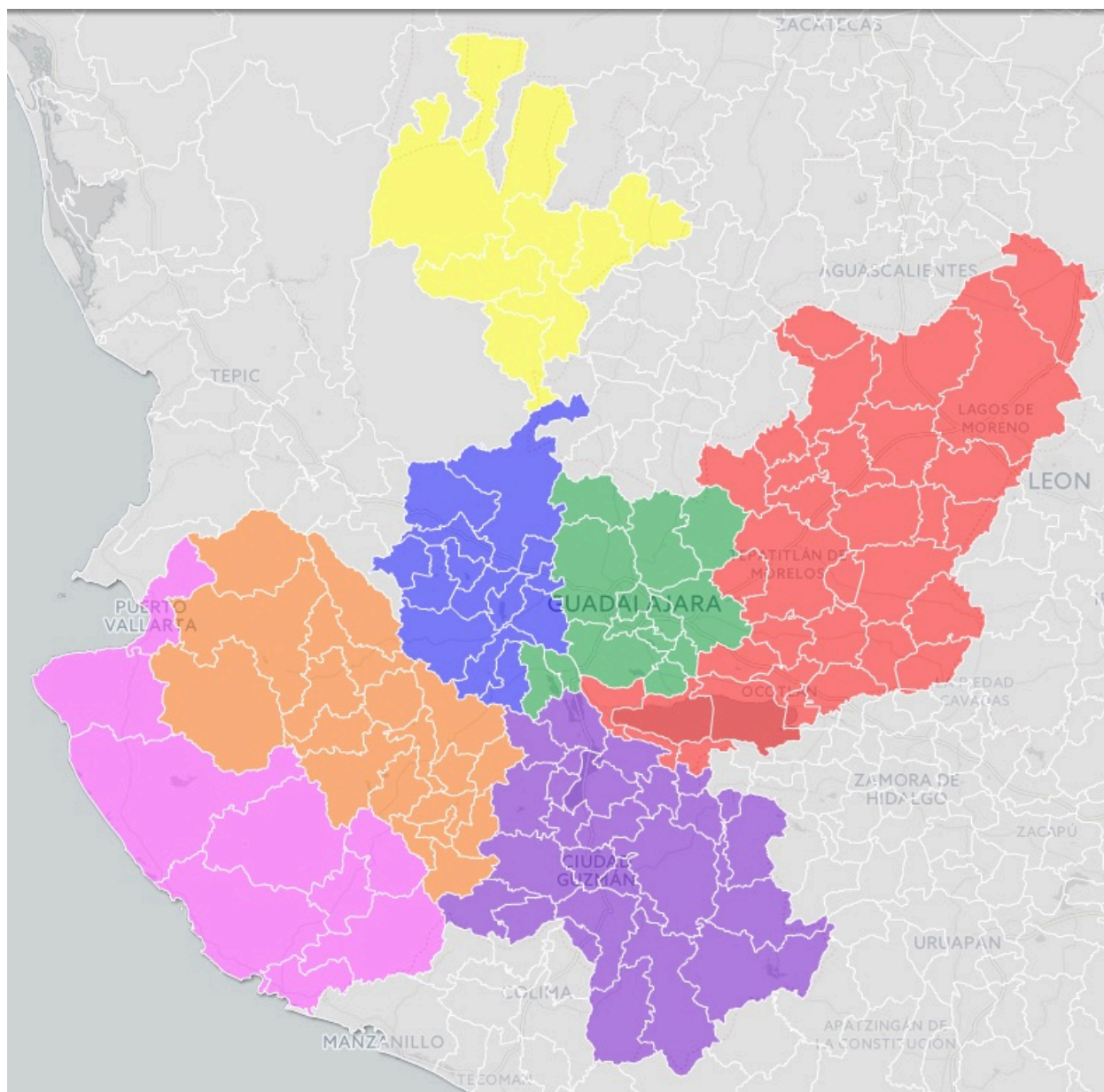
Guanajuato Sub-Regions



Red: Lerma-Chapala Basin; Green: Sierra Central; Blue: Lomas Arribeñas; Yellow: Sierra Gorda. The southern areas of the municipalities of Dolores Hidalgo and San Miguel de Allende are in the Sierra Central. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48640>.

Appendix B

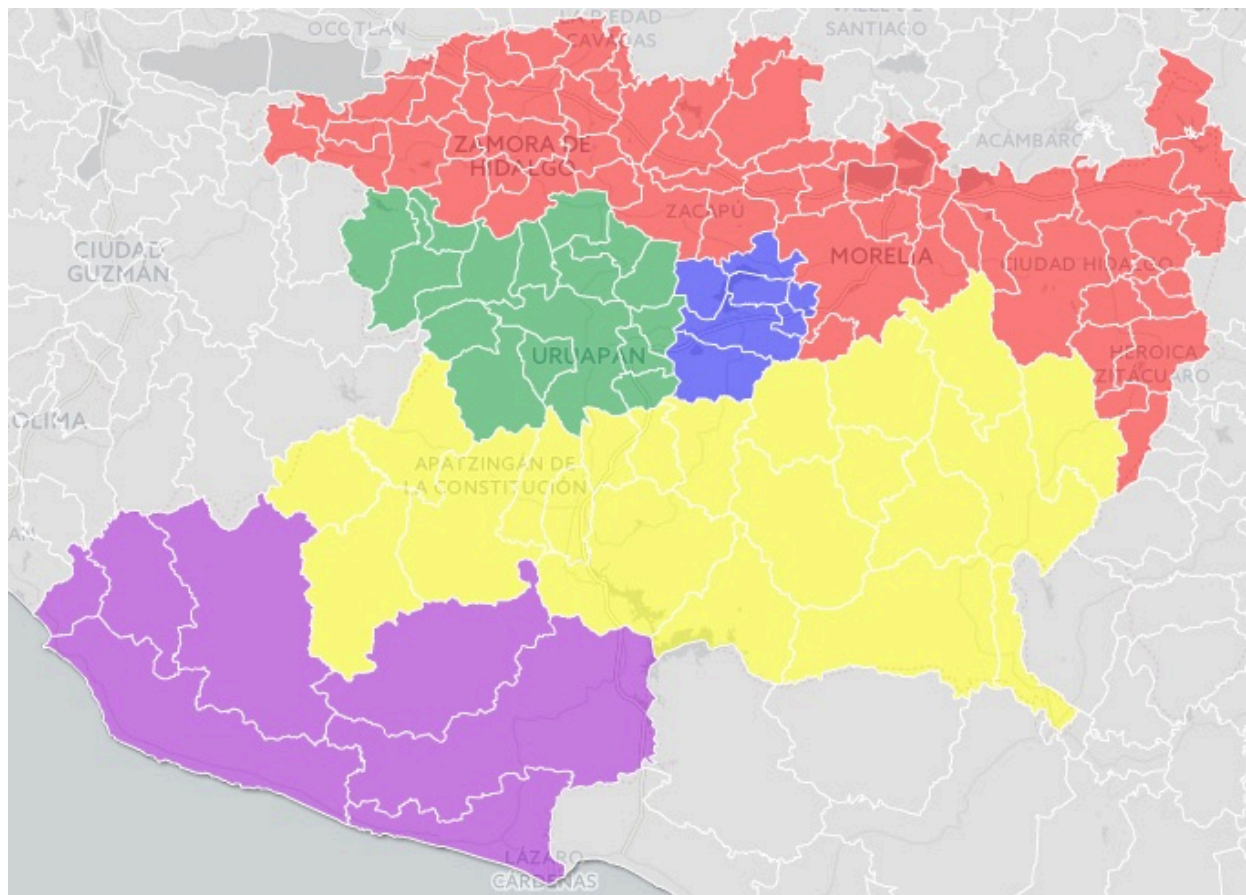
Jalisco Sub-Regions



Red: Lerma-Chapala Basin; Green: Guadalajara Metropolitan Area; Blue: Valles; Yellow: Norte; Orange: Sierra; Violet: Sur/Sureste; Pink: Costa. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48643>.

Appendix C

Michoacán Sub-Regions



Red: Lerma-Chapala Basin; Green: Sierra Purépecha; Blue: Pátzcuaro Basin; Yellow: Tierra Caliente; Violet: Sierra de Coalcomán. Source: Target Map, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=48645>.

Appendix D

Bracero Contract Distribution by Center-Western State

State	1942-1944	1953-1954	1960-1964
Guanajuato	19,848	58,761	132,263
Jalisco	8,202	54,458	110,054
Michoacán	34,069	48,371	143,527
Total Center-West	62,119	161,590	385,844
Total Mexico	118,471	510,413	1,166,845
Percent from Center-West	52.43	31.66	33.07

Source: Cross and Sandos, *Across the Border*, 44; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 157.

Appendix E

Bracero Contract Distribution by Center-Western Sub-Region

Guanajuato: 1945

Sub-Region	Contracts
Lerma-Chapala Basin	3,310
Lomas Arribeñas	410
Sierra Central	310
Sierra Gorda	70

Source: AGGEG.

Jalisco: 1947-1948, 1952

Sub-Region	Contracts
Guadalajara Metropolitan Area	5,008
Lerma-Chapala Basin	4,217
Sur/Sureste	2,517
Sierra	1,123
Norte	1,014
Valles	893
Costa	431

Source: AHJ.

Michoacán: 1945, 1947, 1959, 1963-1964

Sub-Region	Contracts
Lerma-Chapala Basin	19,323
Sierra Purépecha	3,363
Pátzcuaro Basin	3,067
Tierra Caliente	1,505
Sierra de Coalcomán	370

Source: AGHPPEM.

Appendix F

Bracero Contract Requests by Center-Western Sub-Region

Guanajuato: 1942-1964

Sub-Region	Requests
Lerma-Chapala Basin	437
Lomas Arribeñas	14
Unknown	11
Sierra Central	6
Sierra Gorda	5

Source: AGGEG; AGN.

Jalisco: 1942-1964

Sub-Region	Requests
Lerma-Chapala Basin	199
Guadalajara Metropolitan Area	133
Sur/Sureste	55
Norte	42
Valles	42
Sierra	20
Unknown	19
Costa	12

Source: AHJ; AGN.

Michoacán: 1942-1964

Sub-Region	Requests
Lerma-Chapala Basin	1,044
Sierra Purépecha	145
Pátzcuaro Basin	71
Sierra de Coalcomán	54
Unknown	50
Tierra Caliente	46

Source: AGHPM; AGN.